

LORETTA

The Sunshine of the
Convent



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A NOVEL

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By GILBERT GUEST



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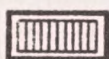
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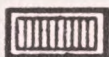
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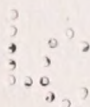
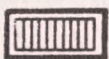
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Convent



A NOVEL



BY
GILBERT GUEST



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LORETTA

THE SUNSHINE OF THE CONVENT

CHAPTER I

THE CONVENT SUNSHINE

The gay group of school girls was suddenly hushed into silence as Sister Martina stepped into their midst.

Then bedlam let loose, the sister was besieged on all sides. She had spoken in French, but she was overwhelmed with an avalanche of French, Spanish, German and English. The school was a French Academy so famous for its discipline and teaching that its pupils were of many nationalities.

Raising her hand, Sister Martina stilled the tumult and said,

“Loretta, Loretta, where is she?”

Each girl turned in amazed silence to mutely question her neighbor. Loretta, the idol of the school, had received a call to the parlor. It was impossible.

“Young ladies can you find her?” Instantaneously half a dozen eager girls went in search of Loretta. With a noiseless bound a tall, well rounded, but slender girl, willowy in her movements, stood in their midst.

Above the black uniform dress of the school rose a head of striking beauty. Her face was exquisitely white, not with the pallor of sickness, nor the stiff cold clearness

of marble, but with the translucent whiteness sometimes found in the healthy lover of books. The delicate pink cheeks, however, could, on a moment's notice, bloom with the hue of the wild rose, while her eyes, clear wells of innocence, would glow in sympathy with the sudden emotion. Every movement of her slender form was fraught with unconscious grace. A wealth of chestnut curls, parted simply in the middle of her head, beginning with pretty golden rings round her forehead, and gradually increasing in length till they reached her slender waist, made her head a vision of beauty.

Her movements were swift and noiseless and as she stood in the crowd of girlish worshipers, she seemed a woodland nymph, poising a moment before taking flight.

CHAPTER II

THE PAST IS PRESENT

“Loretta,” the girls cried, “you are wanted in the parlor.”

“In the parlor,” echoed Loretta, “truly Sister Martina, do you want me?”

“Truly, dear,” smiled the sister, “come quickly. The girls interposed. Loretta, their beloved one, was going for the first time in her long school life, alone to the parlor.

“Sister, let her change her dress. Let me smooth her curls,” they exclaimed with ready sympathy. Quiet though she was, the sister had an eye for the artistic and she saw that the tumbled curls were more charming in their disorder than they would be, if smoothed into regular lines, so repulsing all proffered help, she quickly left the room followed by Loretta.

“Who is it, Sister?” breathlessly demanded the eager girl; but without answering, the sister sped down the long corridor till, stopping before the parlor door, she awaited Loretta, then pushing her in gently, left her alone with the visitor.

In the dim shadows of an immense parlor, a gentleman was seated with his back to one of the heavily curtained windows, and as Loretta could not distinguish his features, she stood irresolutely at the door-way, shyly waiting for the visitor to speak. He approached her quickly and when near enough to see her plainly, his aspirated “My God,” so startled the young girl, that she turned to flee from his presence, but was stayed as he caught her flowing ringlets, saying,

“Loretta, my beloved child, would you fly from your father? I frightened you, I know that I did, but you have grown so like your dead mother, that for a brief second, I believed you were she. You are not afraid of me darling?” the man’s voice broke. He held out his arms pleadingly; in his anxiety, he had turned to the side and so had let the light from the window fall on his face.

In repose the face was stern with strength; but illumined by love as Loretta saw it, it was a countenance full of light and tenderness. A rapid glance, a moment’s hesitation, and the young girl shyly threw herself into her father’s extended arms.

Sixteen years ago, Gerald Gibbons, a rich American, while traveling through France was left a widower with a young son and an infant daughter barely a week old. Nearly distraught by his added responsibility and sudden affliction, he made his way to the convent with the nurse, his infant daughter and a one year old boy, and frantically besought the nuns to take the three.

At first, the Mother Superior promptly refused, but as the distracted man pleaded his necessity, alone in a strange country, knowing no language but his own, called home imperatively by business, utterly ignorant about the bringing up of children, she yielded so far as to take the baby without the nurse. And Loretta passed sixteen sweetly peaceful years with the gentle French nuns, before her father thought of claiming her.

It seemed strange to them that a man so wealthy as Mr. Gibbons should have allowed so many years to slide by without crossing the water to see his little daughter. Business first, then a growing aversion for the daughter that caused her mother’s death, were the reasons for his apparent indifference.

The fact that business brought him into that part of France was the occasion of Loretta meeting her father for the first time. He had passionately loved his wife and when he saw his beautiful daughter looking in at the parlor door, the striking resemblance to her mother set into wild longing all his parental affection.

He had visited the Convent without any purpose except a passing call of ceremony, but his plans were quickly formulated.

“Loretta, my precious darling, my ship sails tomorrow. You must be ready to go with me,” as he saw her startled expression, “you are not afraid of me, my dove, see here is your mother’s picture. Loretta, she loved me.” He broke down. Loretta, quick and tender-hearted, understood. “And I love you too, father, yes, I will go with you, but how can I leave my dearest friends so soon?” He frowned, his face was full of a dark rugged strength and Loretta shrank from him, but catching and folding her to his heart, he said,

“My precious child, if these nuns have taught you well, they have told you that your father must come before them. I am sorry to hasten you, but I am a very busy man and must be in New York by a certain date. Of course I could return for you, but Loretta, since I have seen how like your mother you have grown, I cannot leave without you. Go dear, make preparations and I will return.” He clasped her passionately to his heart and so checked the burning words that sprang to her lips; when he released her, his eyes were full of tears, and pity for him again silenced her impetuous protests.

Bidding her in a gentle tone of command to call the Superior, he hastily informed the sorrowing sister of his intention to take his daughter. The news spread through

the house, from the graduating room to the kitchen. "Loretta, their beloved Loretta, was going to leave them, their baby, their very own child was leaving them forever," Sorrow and lamentation burst forth.

The young girl herself when her father had gone to prepare for their hasty departure, was inconsolable.

"Oh, my precious Mother," she cried, frantically embracing old Sister Ambrose who had been her nurse and life-long friend. "How can I go! How can I leave you the only mother I have ever known? What am I saying? Are they not all mothers to me; my precious darling Sisters. Oh CAN I live without them?" she sobbed.

Sister Ambrose mingled her tears with the young girl's. "My darling Loretta, he is your father."

"I know it, dear Sister, I know that I shall love him; but—but I am afraid of him, I don't know him as I know you all. I shall die, I know I shall."

The sister gently caressed her till the paroxysm of grief spent itself and then said brokenly,

"It's a great grief, my precious child, but we feel it too. You, in time will become reconciled, you will have your father and you will have learned to love him, but we know when our baby leaves us, she has gone forever."

A burst of grief interrupted her.

"Sister, why do you tell me this?"

"My child, to teach you patience. When you leave me, I will feel as if a part of my heart goes with you; still I know it is your duty to go with your father, therefore, I bow to the will of God; and say God be with you. I held you in my arms when you were a helpless, smiling baby. The Mother Superior had told your father it was contrary to our customs to take care of infants, when with a crowd of delight you put up two hands and clasped my

cheeks and cooed. 'See, Mother,' I cried, 'the baby wants me, give her to me. I will take entire charge of her; and Mother,' I tactfully added, 'I will then have no time to be lonesome.' Six months before you came, while traveling with my parents through Europe, I had stopped here to rest; I was not strong, and the physicians had said my native air, the city of Boston in America, was too strong for my constitution, so my parents brought me here; the first time I entered this Convent I felt such a peace as I had never before experienced and then and there I told my mother and father that I should have to remain. You can imagine what they felt. But they were good Catholics and recognizing God's will, sorrowfully bade me goodbye. I have never regretted the act, though my heart nearly broke when I parted with them. You, my precious child, were a great consolation to me; all the sisters spoke a foreign tongue, but the first words you lisped were English ones; perhaps if I had not had you to talk to I might have forgotten my own language. And now my baby, you must do your duty in separating from me to go with your father, as years ago, I did mine."

She ceased, and together they mingled their tears, till a sudden entrance of an anxious crowd of girls put an end to the sad scene. Everyone, from the smallest child, had some gift for their worshipped companion; so many were the presents that Loretta laughing and crying said,

"Oh, where shall I put them? I have but one trunk."

"Ma belle," cried a gay English girl whose swollen eyes emphatically expressed her grief, "Ma belle, you shall take mine; no, not a word. Put all your clothes and gifts into my large trunk and I shall keep your little one till I die, and then I shall be buried in it."

As the speaker was abnormally large, the absurdity of squeezing herself into a small trunk provoked a hearty laugh in which even Loretta joined.

In the midst of all the excitement, the Mother Superior, followed by Mr. Gibbons appeared. The girls held their breath for one brief second, but when their beloved Loretta put on her hat preparatory to leave, a wild burst of sorrow broke from all.

Mr. Gibbons himself was touched, and in order to hide his feelings, took an abrupt leave almost carrying Loretta to the carriage. Throwing herself into the corner of the seat, she was about to give way to uncontrollable grief when a soft,

“Pardon, Monsieur, Loretta my child,” aroused her. Hastily quitting the carriage she threw herself on her knees before the Mother Superior and folding her hands said,

“Bless me, my Mother.”

The nun with impressive earnestness laid her hands on the gold-brown head and bending low over it murmured tenderly,

“Courage Loretta, the performance of duty is the greatest nobility.”

With a mighty effort the young girl sobbingly assured her, when she had finished crying, she would be brave, and then tearing herself away, she once more entered the carriage.

CHAPTER III
LORETTA FINDS A FAIRY GODFATHER IN
HER NEW WORLD

Borne swiftly away, a new era opened in her life. For a time nothing was heard but the soft whir of the carriage, the clatter of the rapidly moving horses and the stifled heart-broken sobs of Loretta.

With the deepest sympathy Mr. Gibbons watched the fragile figure shaken by the pent-up grief within it and yielding to a sudden impulse, he gently took his daughter to his heart and said tenderly,

“My little girl, my poor baby, do not try to keep back your sorrow. Cry here on my heart, you prototype of my dear dead wife.”

The soft, rich voice was a surprise to Loretta. Looking up quickly and catching the tender glance of two brilliant eyes, she realized that if she had left the shelter of one love, she was resting in that of another, strange indeed, but deeply tender.

Obedying his behest, she let her grief have full expression and in consequence of the freedom, she recovered sooner than she would otherwise have done.

A couple of hours after leaving the Convent, she found herself talking with ease to the father whom the day before she had not known. 'Twas the first long ride she had had in her short young life. In spite of sorrow, everything appealed to her, the people as they passed, the scenery, the villages and finally the railroad station—what a wonderful place it was with its ever changing

crowd, the whir and bustle. With delight her father saw her cheek glow like a wild rose, her eyes dilate with excitement, but when they boarded the train, and the engine began to snort, and the whistle to shriek, in real terror Loretta clung to him. Sympathetic, yet pleased by the mute appeal to him as her protector, he soothed her while explaining away her doubts. Fear soon gave place to pleasure and Mr. Gibbons realized, though the girl possessed a clear brain, well stocked with general information as to pedagogic lore, she was absolutely ignorant of the world and its wiles. Sin existed for her in the abstract—the world was sinful, the nuns had told her so—but why did people want to sin, the earth was full of beauty.

“Papa, see that bend in the river—note how the sunlight glints the leaves—oh, it has vanished. Mother Bernard says that is the way with the joys of this world. You see them and they are gone,” she stopped to mutely question him with her beautiful eyes.

“Loretta, my girl, the world shall be full of beauty for you. Do you understand, I am a very rich man, and all that money can buy is yours. Do you take what I mean?”

She did not answer him but gazing thoughtfully at him seemed not to see him.

“Girlie, wake up. What do you desire most. Anything that money can buy you shall have. We are nearing Paris—we have a lay off there of a couple of hours, our steamer does not start till five, so we can visit the stores and empty them if you say.” He laughed heartily as he saw her sudden start of comprehension and her eyes dilate with pleasure.

“Oh papa, you are just like a fairy Prince. Sister

Ambrose used to tell me wonderful stories because she said that when a person went through life not having the imagination developed she lost half the pleasure of living."

He looked at her with puzzled amazement, fairy literature was to him an unknown quantity.

"She did, did she! Humph, I wonder what an old nun knows about pleasure?" The shocked expression on Loretta's face warned him he was on delicate ground, a keen man of business, accustomed to read through the motives of friend or foe, he understood that he must do or say nothing to shake her awakened confidence in him.

"Of course, child, Sister Ambrose knows more about those things than I do. All the fairies I know are an impish kind that jump around in the shape of Bears and Bulls."

"Now papa, of course fairies only exist in the imagination, but I can easily think—Oh see those beautiful flowers," the train was slowly entering the city and had been boarded by the usual vendors of small articles, one of whom was selling flowers.

"Here you boy—take your choice, Loretta. All right. Ten francs, here you are," throwing the boy a lire. "Change? don't bother, it's worth twice as much," turning with pride to watch the delight of Loretta.

"You were saying you could easily think?"

"I forget now—but see, could not I imagine this exquisite flower a dear little fairy with red and gold wings?"

"Hanged if I could—but I tell you what I could do—I could easily imagine you a fairy."

"Dear me, I'm too tall, they are very tiny you know."

“You are very beautiful, child, far more beautiful than those flowers.”

“Yes,” she answered gravely, not at all elated by the compliment, “Sister Letitia taught us the human soul ranked higher than the vegetable soul.”

The man of business gasped. What manner of child was she—innocent as an angel gravely talking philosophy, although he did not recognize it as such, he did feel that she was, as he would have expressed it, talking over his head.

Dismissing an awkward subject as was his wont with a big bluster, he replied,

“Come now, how about emptying these stores—how about getting a couple of saratogas full of new finery?”

“Saratogas?” she repeated.

“Yes, American for trunk,” he laughed.

“Oh, I don’t need any clothes, but papa if you mean I can have whatever I want?”

“Yes,” he interrupted eagerly, “anything you damn please, pardon the slip dear, I am so used to dealing with hard-headed, hard-fisted men, that I am somewhat rough in my speech, you won’t mind me child?” he humbly asked.

Vaguely understanding his dominant disposition, but thoroughly alive to the fact her father worshiped her, Loretta answered sweetly,

“Yes, papa, I will both mind and love you.”

Then Loretta lost her breath and the passengers back of her gasped in amazed astonishment as the grave autocrat of Wall Street caught his daughter to his heart.

“There, I’ll never do it again,” he laughed—“till the next time. Come on, here we are.”

“Porter see that those duds are put on a truck and sent to Steamer Hans Albert. Here Loretta, step in here,”

entering a carriage as he spoke. "And driver take us to Bon Marche. Now then, Loretta, what do you want?"

"Papa," she hurriedly exclaimed, realizing that she was going to a store, "If I can have anything I desire, I would like to send a present to every nun and pupil at Sancte Marie, but—" she stopped and looked inquiringly into his eager face.

"Well?" he asked.

"There are seventy girls and, let me see," counting on her fingers, "thirty nuns," she gazed questioningly at him. "Is it too many?" she timidly asked him.

"Too many—ha! ha! ha! Why you could give a thousand if it would make you happy."

Delightedly hugging him she began searching in great haste in a little handbag she carried.

"What's up now?" he asked.

"I had a little pencil here, but I can't find it— and a little tablet, but—"

"See here," producing a fountain pen and a large tablet of paper from one of his voluminous pockets. "Proceed—Present No. one?"

"Oh dear, I can't think—Mother Bernard ought to come first because she is the head, you know."

"Of course," he replied falling in with her humor. "What will you get her?"

"Oh, I can't think— isn't it delightful, just like Aladdin and his wonderful lamp!"

"Just so," he gladly assented, not quite certain if Aladdin was not one of the convent's patron saints. "Well?"

"Oh on her Feast Day they always give her books— and pieces of furniture—but it seems to me they are not

just for her very own self, because all the girls and nuns use them. What do you think, papa?"

"Cut them out."

Her puzzled expression delighted him and he proceeded to explain that his idea of a gift was something the receiver could look upon as her own.

"You think just as I do, papa," she joyously cried. "Oh, oh," the delighted exclamations were caused by the beautifully decorated shop windows. They had alighted at the Bon Marche and were soon standing by one of the big counters and the obsequious clerk causing Loretta much embarrassment as the list of presents had not been written.

"Show this young lady some of your prettiest wares." They happened to be in front of the hosiery—and at the word of command Loretta was literally deluged with boxes of hosiery—gazing bewildered at them, half fancying she was dreaming, she fingered them doubtfully while her father understanding her indecision as non-satisfaction, commanded the clerk to take them away and bring silk ones. Beautiful silk hosiery of all colors, pink red, blue, lay before her, what would she do—she had never seen the nuns stockings and felt dimly that these were not quite right.

"Papa, I don't quite see what to do, they dress in black you know." The grim man of business had a strong sense of humor, picking up a beautiful box of yellow and pink silk stockings, he gravely replied,

"That's all right, they may have black outside and yellow inside. Suppose you take these."

Naturally generous but accustomed to the use of a certain number of articles of underwear, she picked out half a dozen pairs.

“Shall I take these?” she timidly asked.

“Certainly not—take them by the box.” And so Mother Bernard, a short while after was the astonished recipient of two boxes of beautiful pink and yellow silk stockings, while Sister Ambrose received wonderful handkerchiefs, perfume, soap and silken underwear—and so on through the whole sisterhood, the sister’s presents being sent in a trunk marked for them.

The advent of its coming was an occasion of much merriment. Never did the community room ring with such mirth, but the happy laughter was not unmingled with sadness.

“God bless our darling,” laughed Mother Bernard, wiping away a tear, “nothing was too good for us.”

The trunk sent the girls contained things pretty enough to set the ordinary school girl wild with excitement, for when Loretta became accustomed to the bewilderment of the assemblage of beautiful articles, the woman in her soon came to the uppermost, and she, regardless of expense, picked out what appealed to her artistic sense. Her father, delighted to see her assert herself, obediently followed in her wake, paying the most exorbitant prices with a grin of satisfaction.

At length, realizing that even pleasure may become a toil and noting with the quick eye of love that her father was looking tired she exclaimed,

“Papa, I finished them all except Camille, and you are tired, my fairy god father.”

“Not at all—get Camel something.” And so the rheumatic old gardener received a pair of suspenders gorgeous enough for a prince, not to speak of various other articles so beautiful that Camille blushing declared only the Cure was good enough to wear them.

Looking at his watch Mr. Gibbons saw that a short interval of time remained before the hour set for the departure of the vessel, a hurried meal at a hotel, a dash of carriage wheels and the big steamer in the wharf awaited them.

“Loretta child, that is your home for the next week, and by the by I forgot to mention your brother goes with us.”

“My brother—how could I have forgotten. I just love him papa.”

The father’s face clouded.

“Loretta you love him? You have never seen him.”

“Oh yes—his letters and his photograph. I think he is very handsome.”

“Humph! Handsome is that handsome does.” She was bewildered, how strange her father had not spoken of Lawrence before—he did not seem pleased. Saddened, she knew not why, she followed him up the gangway soon forgetting in a new sensation all about her brother.

To Loretta’s unsophisticated mind the attention with which the officers of the steamer welcomed her father meant nothing more than good will. Even the Captain’s speech failed to make her understand her father’s prestige.

“Welcome, Mr. Gibbons,” said the first officer, “your suite of rooms are kept for you, but I’ve had the time of my life to hold it. A bridal party telegraphed—then when I held that off, Duke de Branford telegraphed and offered to double the price.”

“He did, did he? Damn his French impudence. What did you say to him Captain?”

“Said an American duke held them.”

“Bully for you,” slapping him on the back. “I’ll

make it square old man, but where is my son, isn't he on board?"

"Yes—he was on this morning, but after fixing some of his belongings in his stateroom went off with a party of young men."

Mr. Gibbons' face was stern as he muttered, "Just like him, here Captain is the new passenger I telegraphed about, my daughter, Miss Gibbons."

Loretta at the sound of the unfamiliar title looked around as if expecting to see a real bona fide young lady acknowledge ownership to the same. She found instead the hearty old Captain gazing at her with undisguised admiration.

After a short interchange of civilities her father conducted her down stairs and showed, with a good bit of pleasure, the handsome suite of rooms he had engaged.

"Not quite as roomy as your home in New York will be, but I think, my child, this will answer the purpose. Eh! what do you think?"

The chief thing of which she was thoroughly conscious was the stuffy atmosphere so noticeable on a ship, especially when it is lying at rest in the harbor. She felt sickened, but her womanly intuition told her her father was longing for praise.

"Tis pretty, papa, and far too big for me—I know I will be happy, but—"

"But what?" he insisted.

She laughed. "It embarrasses me to see myself so often," pointing to the many panelled mirrors.

"'Tis not often a pretty girl objects to seeing herself," but turning to the porter who had just entered,

"Well—what's up?"

"A party of gemmen, sar."

“That’s all right, porter,” sung out a lusty voice. “Gibbons you thought to steal a march on us, didn’t you?”

“Great Scott, Tom, I did forget to call at the office, but you know I would have wired.”

“Very probably if the distraction did not continue,” looking towards Loretta.

“My daughter, gentlemen.”

With quiet unconscious grace the convent bred girl responded courteously to the effusive greetings and save for heightened color, few could guess this was her first public reception. The party, six gentlemen crowded round her and for a few seconds seemed to forget their urgent business, until the first speaker said, addressing her father,

“You know the U. P. Bonds went up in the air just an hour ago.”

At once Mr. Gibbons was the alert man of business. Turning quickly to Loretta he bade her in a low voice to wait on deck for him.

CHAPTER IV

A MUTUAL ADMIRATION

Obedying his behest, she mounted the steep ladder, pushed through a surging crowd of newcomers on the deck, soon found a sheltered corner near the dividing line of the second cabin and facing the sea was quickly lost in thought. How long she sat she knew not, but she looked up to see a young man with his hat held aloft regarding her with intense interest.

“Pardon me—but I believe you are my sister.”

“And you,” springing delightedly to her feet “are my brother.” And for an interval of time each regarded the other with pleasure. Then making the first advance, bending down a strikingly handsome head he said,

“Allow me a brother’s privilege,” and gallantly kissed her. The blood surged to her cheeks and neck, then receding left her pale.

“I have displeased you?” he questioned.

“Oh no, Lawrence, I am delighted to find you. How grand you are!” she laughed joyously.

Catching her hands in his he drew her down to a seat beside him.

“Sit down my beautiful sister. You are a dream.”

“Am I?” she frankly asked. You like me already?”

“Like you,” he echoed, “if I were a Greek I’d worship you as one of the deities.”

“O, dear no, you should only worship God.”

He watched her with a smile of delighted amusement. “Pious too! What does the Governor say?”

“Governor?” she queried.

“Yes, Dad you know.”

“Dad?” she echoed.

“Father,” he explained, “what did he say about you?”

“I don’t know Lawrence.”

“Does he not think you beautiful?”

“Oh, I suppose so,” she indifferently asserted, “but don’t let us talk about me; tell me about yourself.”

“About myself,” he mused. “Nothing in that quarter, Loretta, but trouble.”

Her expression of sympathy was so sincere that in a short time she knew most of the chapters of his young unrestful life. In spite of herself as she listened to the tale of the misunderstanding between father and son, she espoused the cause of the latter, although she did not say so. It shocked her sense of right to learn that father and son did not love each other.

“But Lawrence, if you explain when you get into these difficulties, about spending money.”

“Explain,” he bitterly interrupted. Why he won’t let a fellow open his head,” in answer to her puzzled expression. “That is slang for talk.”

“Oh.”

“He just pulls the strings tighter.”

“What strings?”

“Purse strings,” he laughed. “You literal young lady. You’ll have me talking English soon instead of American.”

“Is there any difference?” she innocently asked.

“Ha ha!” laughed he. “A wide difference between their slangs. What I mean, is the governor, no dad, father, I mean is so stingy.”

“Stingy,” she exclaimed. “Why he is a fairy prince in generosity.

“I wish I saw some of it.”

“Do you mean to tell me, Lawrence, father does not give you money?”

“Oh, yes, he gives me an allowance, but if I go beyond, —Great Scott, you ought to hear him! Even on this trip he says I’ll have to pay for my stateroom. Now that’s not handsome, is it?”

“I really do not know. I should imagine one as clever as he is in business would know best about those things, don’t you think so, dear?” she gently asked.

“Clever, Oh yes—‘A giant among giants, one of the big moguls of Wall Street,’ perhaps one of the biggest, but it would be a heap more comfortable if he were not so clever, he couldn’t rub it in so hard. Say Loretta, I ought to be ashamed of myself saddling you with my troubles the very first time we meet.”

“Lawrence, dear brother, promise me one thing,” she looked so charmingly eager that catching her hands in his he said,

“Anything, dear—anything you wish.”

“I want you to promise me that you will always bring me your troubles.”

“To sadden you,” he asked gravely.

“No, that I may help you by my sympathy.”

“Help me—you have done it already, the world looks brighter now than it did an hour ago. Jove, there is father.”

CHAPTER V

LORETTA SEES A NEW PHASE OF HER FATHER

“You here, sir?” sternly demanded his father. “Why did you not meet us when we came aboard?”

Lawrence at the sound of his voice sprang to his feet and stood shrinkingly before the angry man. Loretta could hardly believe the evidence of her eyes, the gallant brother was changed to a cringing coward—the attitude the son always took on occasions like this, made the father look on him with the contempt a strong man sometimes regards a weaker one.

“What was the reason, sir?” he angrily demanded.

“Why father, the boys—the—” stammered Lawrence,

“The boys—always the boys. Yes you think more of your scamps of companions than you do of the decencies of life. By all codes of politeness you should have been here to welcome you sister. I see you have made her acquaintance. Come Loretta, the first bell has sounded for supper. I suppose in your intense interest in this rude chap you didn’t even notice we have put out to sea.”

Her exclamation of surprised wonder, partly allayed his anger.

“Didn’t notice, eh? Thought so. Come on.”

Taking the arm extended to her, Loretta went a few steps and turning to look back, touched to the heart at the abject humility of Lawrence, stopped her father, and looking him straight in the eyes, with an unconscious assumption of his determined manner said,

“Father, Lawrence must come with us.”

Startled by the likeness to himself he chuckled with

delight and answered quickly, "Anything you say goes, Loretta.." Putting her hand out at her side she called, "Lawrence, come."

Delighted to find he had a champion in her, he sprang eagerly forward and seizing her hand squeezed it so as to make her wince.

Arrived at the Captain's table, Mr. Gibbons was assigned the place of honor, but he was not at all pleased by the Captain's placing of Loretta and Lawrence, they, brother and sister, being seated some six chairs below, so, as the Captain explained, the young people at the end might have a good time.

Delightedly taking his place, Lawrence said, "Blessings on the Captain for a level headed American. This is immense, Loretta, we have the end to ourselves. Wine, waiter did you ask? Certainly, a gallon, a gallon, maybe a vineyard to celebrate this lucky happening," laughed Lawrence, while the colored waiter understanding he was dealing with a multi-millionaire's son, bowed obsequiously and replied,

"Sartinly, sar."

Loretta then saw her brother at his best. His was a pleasure-loving nature, never happier than when among gay young people, brilliant when he chose to be, as being well read, his witticisms scintillated like beads on the champagne he was so generously drinking. Indeed the more he drank, up to a certain point when he became stupid, the more delightful he waxed. Loretta was carried out of herself and watched him rapturously. How handsome he was, his curly head thrown back, his teeth flashing, his chiseled mouth wreathed in smiles, bewitching, tantalizing, nay at times, almost childlike, and when

he laughed aloud, how musical were the tones, how ringing in their gladness.

The mirth of the party at the lower end was all unheeded by their seniors who, finding a congenial topic were immensely interested in themselves.

But like all the pleasures of this world, this end party came to an untimely close.

"Pardon, Miss Hastings, may I assist you?" cried Lawrence, springing to his feet with a decided stagger and offering his arm to a very sick young lady. Sick as she was, his stagger had not passed unnoticed, so hastily declining his help she climbed in a headlong desperate manner up the companion way. Loretta gazed after her, awe-struck by her dramatic exit.

"What ails her, Lawrence?"

"Nothing, sister, a question of feelings, that's all."

"Feelings?" echoed Loretta. "Did anyone hurt her feelings?"

Ha, ha!" laughed Lawrence, "Yes, Old Neptune is the guilty party. Oh, surely, Miss Mary, you are not going to desert us?" catching another young lady in his arms as she lurched violently forward.

"Oh, oh, I feel so bad, Mr. Gibbons. Oh, I shall die!"

Rising in alarm with intense sympathy depicted on her lovely face Loretta cried,

"Oh, what is the matter with them all?" but Lawrence had already mounted the stairs carrying, half dragging a very miserable young lady.

"The commotion at the lower end of the table had aroused the interest of the older party and dinner for the time being was at an end.

It was not long before Loretta understood the meaning of a sudden stampede from the table. The embodi-

ment of health herself, her main solicitude was to help, and so anxious and ready was she to wait on the sick that if her father had not interfered, she too might have joined their ranks.

“See here, Loretta,” he said one morning, catching her in the act of helping a sick woman, “will you kindly remember you do not belong to yourself, you are mine, and I strongly object to you making a nigger of yourself for these people. Let them get the stewardess.”

“Dear father, the poor woman is nearly dead.”

“But that’s none of your business.”

“Yes, you dear, cross, old father, a good little girl ought to help every one, rich and poor.”

“No siree, not by a long shot.”

“You want me to be happy, papa?”

“Sure thing!”

“I will be most unhappy if you will not permit me to be kind to people.”

“Now look here, little girl, the only object I have in life is your happiness. Be kind to every damn old thing you want to but be sensible. Give me and your brother the greater part of your time.”

In the short but happy days of that eventful voyage, Loretta was thoroughly under the spell of her brother’s charming personality. The only cloud that dimmed the happiness of the time was that she instinctively felt when gaily conversing with Lawrence her father was keenly watchful of them. This surveillance was not unnoticed by the younger man and he chafed under it, showing her his nervous irritation. A few loving words, however, dissipated the ugly mood and brother and sister were happy in each other.

CHAPTER VI

AT THE SIGHT OF LIBERTY LIGHT HOUSE LORETTA REALIZES SHE IS AN AMERICAN

The seventh day of their leaving Dieppe saw their steamer approaching the Liberty Light House. It was the loveliest part of the day, that is the loveliest on the ocean, just after the great red ball had suddenly dropped down below the horizon into the golden lake beneath, leaving in the sky the touch of heaven, the exquisite suggestive colorings of red and amber, that time of the day when one forgets realities of life for the real realities of the life beyond.

That is how Loretta felt the evening she first saw the outlines of the goddess. The passengers had, as was their wont every evening, massed on the deck of the ship to watch the sunset, and had fallen into that quiet that seemed part of the scene, when one of the young men broke the sweet hush with a wild yell,

“Liberty—there she is—hip! hip hurrah! tiger! hurrah, hurrah, yeo!” And Loretta had another viewpoint of her countrymen—let loose. She felt like laughing and crying, in fact she did a little of both. In a short while she transferred her attention from the half crazy passengers to the near approach of her country. She watched with eagerness the dim outlines of the land developing into well defined shore curves—the lovely battery revealing itself, and as twilight deepened and New York flashed out its electric welcome in thousands and thousands of Edisonian stars, Loretta caught her breath with a quick gasp of delight.

“Her father in gay humor heard her aspirated pleasure and looking tenderly at her, patted her arm saying,
“There you are Girlie! The best city in the world!”

The American Flag by this time was floating jauntily in the air, the band vociferating “Hail Columbia,” and the cheering passengers all together evoked Mr. Gibbons’ sturdiest enthusiasm and Loretta’s enthusiastic patriotism; but as the steamer neared the wharf, the joy of the moment was changed by a delighted exclamation from Lawrence,
“The boys!”

Mr. Gibbons turned angrily,
“What did you remark sir?”

But Lawrence was acting like one insane and the question passed unanswered.

A hoarse yell from the shore of “C-O-L-U-M-B-I-A,” burst from a dense crowd of young men on the wharf, and Lawrence danced a frantic jig.

“Hello, Larry. Come off kid. Hip, hip, hurra, tiger! Come on. Come off.”

“See here, sir—you are not going with that crowd,” sternly demanded his father.

Poor Larry’s face was crestfallen and Loretta’s heart thrilled with sympathy.

“Father dear, look at them, they are so glad to see Lawrence, you won’t prevent him going to them?”

“Loretta, you don’t understand, those are a lot of scamps.” Lawrence’s face burned red.

“Father—you have respect for St. Ignatius College. There are five of St. Ignatius Seniors in that crowd and—”

“Yes, and I bet you a fiver,” interrupted his father, “that set won’t make a night of it; but the rest of the gang will.”

During this conversation as the boat jolted against the wharf, the crowd of young men grew noisier.

“Come off, Larry. Cut that out. Hurry up boy. Ah—Ouh!”

“Let him go, father,” persisted Loretta, A disgusted shrug of consent, and with the swiftness of an arrow twanged from the bow, Lawrence sped down the gangway into the crazy crowd.

He was greeted with an enthusiastic roar and immediately hoisted aloft on the shoulders of the two tallest and borne hastily away.

Pleased in spite of himself at the popularity of his son, Mr. Gibbons growled,

“A handsome dog and a selfish one too. Well girlie, you have seen the last of my brave Lawrence.”

“The last?”

“Yes, I’ll bet a twenty, you’ll not see him for a week, so we’ll keep house alone. Now for home.”

CHAPTER VII

WHICH IS MISTRESS IN THE NEW YORK MANSION?

“How are you, Robert?” grasping the extended hand of the delighted chaffeur. “How is nurse and Mary, Lucy and all the girls, eh?”

“Fine, Sir, fine and most crazy to see you!”

“They are, are they? I wonder how they’ll feel when they see my daughter?”

“My, but she is the perty young lady,” said Robert with the hearty familiarity of an old and esteemed servant.

“And as good as she is pretty, Robert. Now old man, let her go,” laughed her father slamming the door of the limousine.”

“Father, did you ask Robert about nurse?” questioned Loretta.

“Loretta, I intended many times during our trip to tell you about Nurse, Nelly Graham, but something interrupted me and so it went. Well, she is the woman who nursed your mother at the birth of Lawrence and she was with us in Europe when you were born. Your mother loved her and made her a kind of companion and when the nuns refused to allow Nurse to stay at the convent and to take care of you and Lawrence, her grief was so genuine that I promised her there and then that I pledged myself to see to her till her death. I took her home with me to New York where she continued to look after Lawrence till he went to school, indeed she has never ceased looking after him and I must say for the ungrateful cad, that he has shown gratitude to Nurse, in fact, I believe he loves her as much as he is capable of loving anyone. And you, Loretta, you be very kind to her, my darling, I

need not ask you. You see she is a kind of privileged person in our house, in fact she has virtually run my home for sixteen years, she it is who hires the girls, when she needs to hire any. Nelly is a kind of an Irish Napoleon and governs with a good bit of wisdom so our girls rarely leave us except to get married. Now when you reach the corner of 95th and Madison avenue, that's our corner, you are mistress of John Gibbons' house, you understand, but don't let Nurse feel it too bad."

"Father," excitedly exclaimed Loretta, "not for one minute would I let Nurse give up her place. Let her go on just the same."

"Loretta, I want you to govern the house. Nurse has more experience than you, so make use of her knowledge for a time and then let her down easy."

"Hello. Hello, glad to see us, eh? Well, well, nurse, just as blooming as ever, pity you are getting such white hair, you might be stepping off. Now, no tears. Damn it! I won't stand for it!"

The limousine had stopped before a palatial residence and down the broad marble steps of the front entrance, the delighted domestics had rushed headlong, laughing and crying. In their joy of welcoming Mr. Gibbons, Loretta was left sitting unnoticed in the limousine, till a loud scream from Nurse on discovering her, caused a general distraction.

"Glory be to God, is it herself come back? Oh my darling, is it my young mistress? Thanks to God in heaven I can die happy." The question of house governing was settled then and there, briefly and forever. Loretta, lost in the voluminous depths of Nurse's embrace, felt she had indeed found a loving mother.

Mr. Gibbons openly wiped away his tears and then

springing up the steps stood at the open portal to welcome Loretta.

“Now girlie, this is your home. Here Nurse, take her her upstairs. Yes, give her her mother’s sitting room. What? Lawrence? Of course he came but you can draw your own conclusions—the boys met him.”

The nurse’s kindly face clouded, but forgetting in her new joy, her disappointment, taking Loretta’s hand in hers, she said,

“Come dearie, I was not expecting such a grand happening as your home coming. Praise be to God and the Blessed Mother,” stopping in their ascent to hug her again. “Come up now, see these are your father’s rooms and this room, you see it opens off his library, is your mother’s dressing room and all is just as she left it.”

With a feeling of indescribable awe, Loretta tiptoed into the room. ’Twas pretty, but oldfashioned, near the handsome marble topped bureau stood a three-legged table and on the top of it was an open work basket, a shower of lace and ribbon flowing therefrom.

“Nurse, darling, is that just as Mamma left it?”

“That workbox was beside her bed when she died, and I boxed it up just as it was and brought it home. When we were going to Europe, we left here in such a hurry to catch the steamer, that that dress you see over that chair was left there; as I said to Lucy when I locked the door, ‘Leave that room till I come back;’ I had a feeling that I would soon return, four weeks later I came back without your mother and finding her dress there, I kissed it and put it back. Don’t cry my child. See, we will hang the skirt up now. The room has the mistress back.”

And so the new mistress came into her own.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW DUTIES WITH NEW EXPERIENCES

The next morning, after a long restful sleep, Loretta woke with a start to find herself in unrecognized surroundings, and with a vague feeling of new responsibilities, she jumped from bed. How beautiful the room was! So different from the severe outlines of the convent dormitory. Oh, she must write and tell her darling nuns all about her new home. How quiet, too, it was, even the stillness, the city had not yet waked up, sent a chill of loneliness to her heart, and for the first time after her first great outburst of sorrow she felt really lonely.

Here was her life, in a great big house, surrounded by servants, with only two associates of her own rank or life, her brother and father and each antagonistic to the other and she—? Her life work was to remember “Duty was noble.”

“But Oh, my girl friends, what shall I do without you?” she sobbed, “never, never to see you again.” Harder and harder was the struggle. Down sank the gold-brown head, but before reaching the bed, its course was arrested and it was pillowed on the motherly breast of Nurse Nelly.

“Asthere! me darlin’ is it crying you are, the first morning in your own home. What would he say if he heard of it?”

“Nurse, you will never tell him,” gasped Loretta.

“Deed no—if he waits for me to tell him things, he’ll wait a long time. Sure, there is Lawrence, if his father were to hear all his cranks, there’d be no standing

the house with him. He's awful hard on the young master."

"Nurse, tell me, what is the reason?"

"Sorra one of me knows child, except that Master Lawrence spends an awful lot of money and why shouldn't he? Sure himself has a great pile and who will he leave it to but ye two?"

"An awful lot of money you say Nurse? Lawrence told me papa was stingy?" questioned Loretta.

"Well Mr. Gibbons is and he isn't. He'll give me anything and more than I'll need to run the house and sure now that you are in it, there'll be lashins to spend—but when it comes to poor Lawrence its different; but dress yourself Allanna and I'll show you Lawrence's room. Your father said the room was good enough for a crowd of rowdies—Lawrence he does have an awful lot of young men in. No—he didn't come last night and maybe it will be a few more nights before we see him. Yes, yes, dear, I know that is wrong and that's just where him and your father falls out. But maybe Larry will act different since you are here. Mass did you say? God bless the child. Yes, just two blocks from here, but not this morning Allanna, I did not make preparations for going, sure I won't let you go out alone. Yes, I go every morning and I offer up the Mass for the conversion of Larry and his father for—" Nurse could say no more, being choked off by a hug from Loretta, who had been eagerly listening as she rapidly dressed. Her toilette completed and prayers said, Loretta accompanied Nurse to Larry's rooms. In comparison with the furnishings of the rest of the house the brother's rooms were plain indeed.

"Nurse, this must all be fixed up. Can we not get some new furniture?"

“Of course we can go down this very day and get it. Anything you say goes. But come now to breakfast.”

Her father greeted her joyously. “Good! I never expected to have a stunnin’ girl at the breakfast table. That’s one place your poor mother failed me. She was never strong and I was obliged to rise so early that she found it more than she could do. So I generally bolted my breakfast in solitary splendor. Is that what my girl is going to do, Eh?” Loretta lost in thought made a mental resolve that cost what it may be, would never again eat breakfast alone. “Eh! Loretta?” he asked.

“No, father, I shall be with you every morning.”

“Good!” The look of genuine pleasure made him young and handsome and Loretta’s first meal in her own home was a very happy one. After breakfast, a tour through the house, a visit to the kitchen, an introduction to a crowd of worshipful servants, then letters to the nuns and girls, made the morning pass quickly; and not until afternoon did Loretta find herself in a furnishing house. What a pleasure it was to buy for one you loved and when that which was purchased was to be a surprise?

“Nurse—see the dark red lounge, will it not look pretty in that little smoking room. You know it is so dark and cold looking. Yes, curtains please to match this lounge. What do you think Nurse, a red carpet?”

“Anything, Allana, that pleases you. I was just thinking what I would do with the old furniture. There is a poor woman, a widow, who has had a heap of sickness, they’re all well now—but everything decent is gone—”

Loretta’s eyes sparkled with intelligence. “Oh, you are going to give Lawrence’s furniture to them, dear Nurse?”

“Just as you say child, if ye are willing.”

“Nurse, as long as you live don’t you say anything like that—you are to do just as you please.” Deeply touched Nurse turned quickly away, not before Loretta had seen her eyes brimful of happy tears.

At last the delightful afternoon came to an end. The next day, after early Mass, was devoted to the refurnishing of her brother’s room. The delightful rush of it, the exhilaration, the frightened enthusiasm, the possibility of Larry’s sudden return, all combined to make it the happiest of days. Loretta, the born housekeeper, was everywhere—pulling up carpets, hanging pictures, draping curtains; and when everything was finished—what a picture of rosy comfort it all was. Oh, if Lawrence would only come, if she could be hidden somewhere when he came in, so as to see his look of delight; but no Lawrence came. On the third day her father was worried, “The young scamp ought to be licked. I was down at the club house, they claim there he left in company with two or three of his boon companions and hasn’t been seen since. He might have the decency to show up and give an account of himself.”

“Papa,” cried Loretta, her face paling at the thought, “he maybe sick.”

“Sick,” he growled, “not a bit of it; he is having a good time some place; but if he had the instincts of a gentleman he would send some word.”

“Papa dear, try to find out the names of the young men with whom he was and then we’ll be able to find him.”

“See here, Loretta, that scamp isn’t worth looking up, but if you are going to lose any sleep over it I’ll see what I can do.” That evening he informed her the young

gentlemen in question had left Lawrence on the car for home. Loretta was sick with anxiety, but her father dismissed the ugly subject with a shrug.

On the morning of the fourth day a very ill looking Lawrence, accompanied by a large dark looking man considerably his senior, stumbled up the steps of his home, Loretta with widely dilated eyes met them at the front door.

“Oh, Lawrence dear.”

“Miss Gibbons, I believe,” bowed the stranger, “your brother has been stopping for the last two days at my boarding house, he has been very ill, but hoping from hour to hour to get over the attack, would not permit me to notify his family. Hold on Larry,” as Lawrence staggered as if he were going to faint.

“Bring him up here if you please.” Up the stairs lurched the two.

“Come sir,” hastily cried Loretta, throwing open the door of the room on which she had bestowed so much loving care, “come in this room, oh, get him to bed. Nurse darling, he’s going to die.” Nurse who had just entered looking sharply at Lawrence, muttered to herself “the same ould story,” and aloud to the distracted girl, “Al-lanna, Larry will not die, here sir, please help me to get this boot off—now the other. Loretta darlint go down to Lucy for a hot water bag and tell her to fix a strong hot lemonade. Now, Larry, hold still till we get your duds off.”

When Loretta returned with the hot water bag Larry was comfortably fixed in bed, Nurse bathing his head with Eau de Cologne, and the dark looking stranger was seated on the side of the bed gazing down on the sick man with a peculiar smile, half bantering, half sympathetic.

“Loretta, did I frighten you?” asked Lawrence. His voice was low and husky.

“You certainly did Lawrence.”

“Well, Sis, forgive me. Oh, Nurse I feel just horrid.”

“I know it, I know it, Allanna; there, there, try and go to sleep. Are you goin’ Mr. Silby?”

“Yes I’d better take my departure before his father returns Nurse. You know Mr. Gibbons and I are not friends.”

At the sound of his father’s name Lawrence started up in fright. “Oh, don’t let him come in, don’t let father in Nurse.”

“No, no child,” crooned the nurse.

“Miss Gibbons, I am Mr. Sibley,” turning to Loretta, “a dear friend of your brother’s for years, I’m only five years older than he though I suppose I look ten years older. Your father for some reason or other has taken a dislike to me and I seldom come to this house. I must confess under the present circumstances I regret that I cannot come.”

“Mr. Silby there must be some mistake, I am sure if you are a friend to Lawrence, you should be welcome here,” hastily cried Loretta.

“You wish me to come,” asked Mr. Silby, a radiant smile transfiguring a somewhat plain sallow face, “then I shall do myself the honor, at some day not far distant,” and bowing low as before a queen, he backed out of the room

“There goes a gintleman, every inch of him if he is poor,” said Nurse.

“Is that the reason papa don’t like him,” eagerly questioned Loretta.

“Sorra one of me knows,” grumbled Nurse, “like

as not it is. Whist! is that himself?" listening to a distant footstep.

"Nurse, Loretta, don't let father in," querulously commanded Lawrence.

"Lawrence, dear, father is most anxious about you."

"Loretta," interrupted Lawrence," promise me you will not tell him I have come home, at least until I'm stronger. I simply couldn't take his abuse in the condition I am now in. Promise," he commanded. Disappointed, she knew not why, sad at heart, believing she was doing wrong, she gave the desired promise. Delighted at her compliance to his will, Lawrence heaved a sigh, turned his back to her and comfortably fixed himself for sleep. Loretta silently watched beside him. "Why did it hurt her so when Lawrence spoke of his father's abuse? What a strange word from the lips of a son against a father, which was wrong? What was her duty? Should she have refused to give the promise, how could she truthfully keep it? Oh, if Sister Ambrose were here, to tell her what to do. Duty, what was it? And the room, why he didn't even look at it." Engrossed in her perplexity, she did not notice that Nurse had darkened the room and had left her alone with Lawrence; she hardly realized two hours had passed till she heard.

"Come Allanna, I'll take care of him now, do you go down to your lunch, and your letters, there's a whole pile for you. Don't come back until you have finished readin' them. Indeed if your father sees you lookin' like that, why he'll kill poor Lawrence."

"Oh, Nurse if papa asks if Lawrence has returned what will I say?" cried poor Loretta.

"Say, say, why say nothing at all," calmly replied Nurse.

“Nurse, how can I do that? Oh, what shall I do—why did I give that promise?”

“Whist! you’ll waken him. See here, child, we must keep your father out of this room at least for tonight for Larry is liable, if he gets worked up, to be took down with fever.”

Educated as she had been by her dear nuns, that honesty was above everything, Loretta felt thoroughly at sea in this, her first introduction to deceit.

“Could I not tell father Larry has come home, at the same time ask him not to come up?” pleaded Loretta.

“No, no, that would never do,” hastily answered Nurse. “Mr. Gibbons when he gets his head set will stop for nobody; when he asks about Larry just pretend you don’t hear, ask if he don’t want you to sing. Go down now child.”

With a strange sinking of the heart Loretta left the sick room. Was Nurse right or wrong? Why did she have to keep her father in ignorance, when he, too, was anxious? But then if Lawrence took the fever. Her letters from her loved Convent home for a couple of happy hours put all perplexing thoughts at rest. With a lap full of these dear epistles, freighted with love and friendship Loretta actually forgot her brother till her father’s voice brought her quickly back to a disagreeable reality.

“Hello! what’s the new occupation? Hey? What’s this crying Loretta?” asked he tenderly gathering her to his heart, regardless of an avalanche of letters falling to the ground. “Oh, papa dear,” she laughed, these are tears of joy, the dear girls wrote such lovely letters.”

“They did, did they? pleased with the presents?”

“Oh, you ought to hear what they say about you. Here’s Louise’s, no it’s Marguerite’s I want. Listen to

this, "Your father ought to be a ruling king, but he's an uncrowned one;" and here is Fanfan, "I knew the very first time I saw his kingly face—"

"Ha! Ha!" laughed her father, evidently pleased, but not a little embarrassed. "Kingly mug would be better, there's no show for looks when you and Larry are around Confound that fellow, why doesn't he come home? I'm beginning to think he maybe sick. What are you hunting for child?"

Loretta at the unexpected mention of her brother's name felt all the blood in her body mount to her face, and in order to avoid the searching gaze of her father she suddenly stooped and fumbled among the letters "There are some more that speak about you," rapidly moving the letters, "in fact, they all thank you, I think this—"

"Oh, let it go. I didn't do it for them, it was for you."

"May I not read it?" she timidly asked.

"Fire away, you never asked me though why I came home so early?"

"Is it early, papa?"

"Humph! I suppose you haven't even bestowed a thought on me, and here I've been working like a horse all the day so as to get off in time to have you titivate up for the Opera. Yes, young lady Grand Opera and Caruso at that. Now, if Larry were here he could go along too. Say what makes your face so red? Oh, I suppose stooping over. Let's have the rest of those precious letters, but I draw the line at the compliments on my physiognomy; you know an old fellow can feel kind of awkward if he receives too many bouquets." Loretta, delighted to find a refuge from deceit in reading, read rapidly while her

father easily content at anything that gave her pleasure watched her ever varying expression with keen delight, forgetting in his study of her the import of the letters. A sudden question from her was often answered wide of the mark; but its inadvertence passed unheeded by the anxious girl in constant dread of a direct inquiry. At length the important letters being read Loretta sought safety in retreat upstairs, her ostensible purpose being as she explained "to titivate." A quick rush to her brother's room found him quietly sleeping with Nurse on guard.

"To the op'ry you say, thanks to the Saints, he'll never think of Lawrence till morning. Lock the door? You may be sure I will. Go now and fix up and I'll send Lucy to help you."

The opera was a world of harmonious beauty to Loretta, and her pleasure was increased by the knowledge that the stern man of business enjoyed it as keenly as she did. While there Loretta breathed easier, feeling certain that Lawrence would not be driven into a fever by the sudden appearance of his irate father. But affairs were nearly precipitated next morning.

"Loretta, I'll be hanged if I don't think I'll put the police on the trail of Lawrence. My God! child, have I frightened you, you are as white as a sheet?"

"No, I'm well father, but I wouldn't do that. Lawrence will come home," she stammered. Her embarrassment did not escape his keen eye.

"Do you know anything about him Loretta?" It had come, the dreadful question. What would you say?—if she answered yes, she'd be obliged to explain that her brother was in the house—if she denied she would have told her first untruth. She was saved either alternative by the entrance of a servant bearing a telegram.

"Shucks, but Jim's in a hurry. Excuse me, dear heart, if I leave you to finish your breakfast, this must be seen to at once. Lucy tell Robert to get the auto. Good-bye darling, when Robert comes back from the office you and Nurse take an airing."

Indignant with herself for getting into such a tangled maze of perplexity Loretta went at once to Lawrence.

"Well sister mine," he called gaily, "Nurse informs me I'm able to get up."

"To get up so soon Lawrence," exclaimed Loretta.

"Why you seem to be sorry about it Loretta."

"I am sorry, Lawrence, I never was so sorry about anything in my life." He stared at her in undisguised amazement.

"Sorry that I am able to get up," he echoed.

"Oh, no," she laughed in perplexity, "not that, but I'm sorry that I had to deceive father."

"'Twill not be the first time he was deceived," he coldly replied.

"Lawrence," she answered with dignity, "it will be the last as far as I am concerned."

"Oh, say, you don't mean to give a fellow away, if the governor gets on to it that I have been two days in the house, and he didn't know it; he'll raise cane." Loretta was shocked, what manner of man was this handsome brother of hers? He seemed destitute of the principles of honor as she held them.

"What do you intend to do Lawrence?" she asked, in as cold a manner as one of her kindly nature could assume. He felt the change and shrewdly realizing this sister of his was a stronger mold than he, he understood he must not show himself too plainly.

"Say, Loretta, you've experienced nothing from Dad

but glad words while I—well there's no use of dwelling on me—I tell you I feel too shaky for an encounter with him. I shall dress this afternoon, go out and return this evening, and notify him I've been sick. I'll get it but not quite so hard as I would if I were to tell things as they were."

"Lawrence, brother dear, what is the use of this? It isn't right—it isn't truthful—the servants all know." He laughed gaily, "To be sure they do. Catch them giving it away. No siree, they are loyal to the last one."

"Lawrence it isn't noble," she persisted. Like all undisciplined natures, Lawrence had in him a strong vein of obstinacy—he looked ugly.

"See here, little girl, this is my affair, if you don't want to help, don't snitch on me. Snitch is turning tattle tale." Loretta gazed at him blankly and then burst into tears. For one brief moment Lawrence had the manhood to be ashamed of himself, but conquering his better impulse said; "Stop that Loretta, if you do much of that I'll go away and stay for keeps."

Not understanding "keeps," but fully realizing Larry was making some dreadful threat, Loretta promised she wouldn't tell.

True to his word, shortly after supper, Lawrence, accompanied by Mr. Sibley, returned to his father's house. To Loretta's surprise, not to speak of her brother's blank astonishment, her father warmly greeted the two.

"Been sick, Larry? Yes, you look it. Stopped at Mr. Sibley's boarding house? Just send me the bill, Mr. Sibley. Nonsense, sir, I won't stand for Larry's spongeing on anyone. But son, you might have let your sister know about your sickness. She's been worried to death. Thought you'd get well? Very likely, but I hope it will

be the last time you put us both on the anxious seat. Loretta, ring for refreshments.”

Poor Loretta. How she lived through that dreadful evening, she never knew. Every kind word of her father's was a stab to her heart. Every fresh equivocation on the part of Lawrence, added pain to her wounded honor.

CHAPTER IX
LORETTA TOUCHES A NEW YORK SOCIETY
WOMAN.

The next few weeks for Loretta was shrouded in grief which numerous calls did not dispel, the hurt to her honor was so deep. One day being especially sad as the dinner hour approached, and with it, the coming of her father, she tried to change her mood with her dress. Deep natures, simple natures, when disillusioned learn quickly. As Loretta graced the dinner table, one would hardly credit that she was the convent child of a few weeks ago,—there was an added dignity, a shade of thought that belonged to one older in years than she. Her father noticed this with an uneasy qualm of conscience; was it possible what Mrs. Harcourt, “an old flame of his,” he had met that day, had suggested to him—

“A girl of sixteen was too young to preside over a household.”

Lawrence was absent for obvious reasons. Father and daughter were absorbed in thought, till Mr. Gibbons asked nervously,

“Loretta, housekeeping doesn’t tire you does it?”

“Oh, dear, no, father,” laughed she, “why do you ask?”

“Well, I met Mrs. Harcourt today, an old friend of mine and of course we got to talking about you—she thinks I am not doing the straight thing to saddle you with a house. What do you think?” anxiously asked he.

“I think, father,” answered Loretta decidedly, understanding with a sweet intuition of love, that the thought worried her father, “that I shall not like Mrs.

Harcourt, if she suggests such things to you. Why I love housekeeping, father.” He heard her declaration with a sigh of content and then told her to be in readiness for a call soon from his old friend.

Indeed Mrs. Harcourt came the next day. Loretta found her to be a typical New York society woman—fascinating, stylish, shrewd and worldly, to the charm of whose manner the unsophisticated convent girl succumbed at once.

“I told your father it was an injustice to you to have so young a girl keeping house for two gentlemen. You should be at school, child. You do not like the thought? I knew your mother, dear, beautiful as a dream; not unlike yourself. She was the rose, you, the bud. You will soon be faded if left to yourself. You cannot be much over sixteen. You must meet my Kate. She is just out, made her debut, and is such a charming girl. I want you to love each other.”

Loretta thought if the daughter were like the mother that would not be a very hard task, still there was something in the character of the elder woman that awakened in Loretta a feeling she could not define. Something that was akin to fear and yet not fear. Was it respect? Was it difference in their ages? Would she dominate her? Whatever it was Loretta was not destined to find out just then.

The next day the daughter called—’twas a case of mutual attraction. In every school mate Loretta had found a worshipping friend, whom she had loved in return, but in this new life of hers, in this strange land of America, she was slow to form warm friendships for the New York girls, of so-called society, who had called on her tired her, and the convent graduates, at least, those

whom she had met on the steamer, shocked her. The European convents do not veneer over rough surfaces, they take time to polish the interior, their graduates learn the principle that the truly educated are subordinate to authority; and that idea is not assimilated in three or four years.

Loretta, it is true, had left her convent without graduation, but nevertheless she had lived there for many years in an atmosphere of sweet deference to the opinion of others—till that atmosphere became a part of herself. Her father's friends, she had found were, like himself, business men, educated on certain lines; but not scholarly men. Their children, especially the girls, inheriting wealth, and with it a love of pleasure—thought little of scholarly lore or the higher things of life; but here was a young woman, Kate Harcourt, Loretta's antipodes, in many respects, yet, a girl after her own heart. Indeed on both sides it was love at first sight. Kate was large, dark and plain looking, irregular features, large mouth and nose, rather small dark eyes, but one forgot complexion or rather the want of it, forgot the formidable nose, in the wonderful intelligence that illuminated the face when interested.

Her figure was fine and her bearing elegant, with a good bit of dash in it. Her voice when excited, a little bit sharp, strange to say, apart from the fact that her speaking voice was not pleasant, her voice tones when she sang were beautiful. Quick and witty in conversation, she was the supplement of Loretta.

The young ladies spent one afternoon together and the close of the day saw a friendship cemented that was to last a lifetime. They were both literary in their bent, both loved music, although Loretta's musical talent did not go beyond the ordinary, she had taste enough to ap-

preciate the gift in others; both were womanly enough to enjoy housekeeping and both aspired to be noble. They formed many plans—they were to study together and as far as Kate's social duties permitted, they were to be together.

“You see, Loretta, as you have not made your bow to society, you're not obliged to go to parties, but I perforce, must accept the many invitations that are showered on me. You have no idea how popular I am. Oh, no, it is not my personality—I am ugly,—'tis so hard to dress me—but ma is one of the powers in New York. It would never do to slight her daughter. Rich? Indeed no, we are not. 'Tis a hard struggle, often to keep up appearance. Pa left us a small interest and occasionally ma dabbles in stocks and makes a big haul. Ma is a shrewd business woman, but back of us, is family, and rich traditions, these two things count in New York. And then, too, ma has many influential relatives. If I had my way dearie, I would earn my own living, I'd make a splendid teacher.”

“Why do you not do it?” eagerly asked Loretta.

“Simply because that stubborn ma won't give her consent to disgrace the family name,” laughed Kate.

“Disgrace?” indignately repeated Loretta, “why at school the nuns taught us work was honorable, the religious who washed the dishes was as noble as the Mother Superior.”

“Bless the dear little democrat, but it is amusing to hear the daughter of one of the richest men in New York, talking about washing dishes. Child, is that a man's voice? It sounds like Mr. Gibbons.”

“It is, and I'm not there to meet him. Pardon me Kate,” and Loretta flew down the stairs. By the time the

greetings to her father were over and explanations given, Kate appeared robed in walking attire.

“Father this is Miss Harcourt, Kate Harcourt. We’ve had such a delightful day.”

“Glad to hear it, but surely the daughter of my old friend is not going to take flight the instant I make my appearance?” Kate laughingly explained ’twas a first call and Dame Etiquette would be scandalized if she stayed longer.

“All right, let the old lady go to Halifax, but you stay for dinner, Miss Kate.”

When Lawrence, who was late, entered the room he saw a large looking lady talking with great animation to his father. Bowing courteously and murmuring something about great pleasure, a somewhat disgusted young man took his place at the table. Loretta, eagerly watching Lawrence, was disappointed, as she understood on the instant he did not warm to her new friend.

Towards the close of the repast Mrs. Harcourt called for her daughter, for one brief second Kate looked slightly annoyed. Hers was too strong a personality to fear anyone, even her dominant mother, but her high sense of duty made her bow obedience to the former’s desires; and if one thing tried Mrs. Harcourt more than another, it was a violation of the little proprieties of social life. Kate knew in prolonging a first call into an afternoon and dinner, she was breaking one of the most important social codes.

“Now, Mr. Gibbons, I’m in for it with ma and you are the guilty one,” laughed Kate as the maid informed them Mrs. Harcourt was waiting for her.

“I surely am, Miss Kate. But remain here until I explain to your mother.” What arguments he brought to

bear on Mrs. Harcourt he did not tell, but he must have convinced her that social etiquette was not grossly abused, as in a few moments he triumphantly entered the room with her on his arm. Sinking gracefully into the seat on Mr. Gibbons' right, Mrs. Harcourt said,

"Really Kate, if Mrs. Grundy ever gets wind of this we will never hear the end of it. You break her most important decree by staying half a day on the first call—"

"And you smash all of them by coming in to dinner," laughed Kate. If Lawrence had not been interested in the daughter he seemed to be intensely so in the mother, and vied with his father in paying her every attention. The latter called her Kitty, and she responded by giving him his Christian name of Gerald.

"Really, Gerald, you ought to be ashamed to have forced me to come down, but you were always the domineering autocrat," laughed Mrs. Harcourt.

"Great Scott! listen to that," ejaculated Mr. Gibbons. "Domineering, why that woman, children, gave me the mitten. Let me see how long—eh! what" he asked as Mrs. Harcourt in pretended dismay laid a beautiful hand on his arm.

"Oh, Gerald, in mercy don't say how many years ago, spare me."

"Why it was only seventeen years ago." he said gallantly unmindful of the merry laughter that followed, increased by Lawrence declaring his father was trying to become a bigamist as his mother was living then.

"Yes, the dear, she was, how I loved your mother, Lawrence," said Mrs. Harcourt, turning to the young man with a look so sweetly sympathetic that, as he told Loretta on their departure, he fell straight in love with her.

“I don’t think the mother half so lovely as the daughter, Lawrence.”

“Shucks!—that yellow-faced big giant of a woman? Why, her nose is Caesarian in its contour.” If Lawrence lacked reverence for women he had been spoiled by women themselves, young and old had knelt at the shrine of his beauty. His remark jarred on Loretta and she said somewhat sharply for her,

“Lawrence, Kate is a lady and my friend, and I think she has a wonderful beauty of expression.”

“All right, Sis, she may be your beauty, but she’s not for mine.”

CHAPTER X

THE STORM BREAKS

This introduction of the Harcourt family into the intimacy of her home life, together with an occasional visit from Mr. Silby and the young people of their set, made Loretta, for the few short weeks that followed Lawrence's fit of sickness, almost forget the unpleasant episode, almost forget that she had unconsciously deceived her father. Kate too, in spite of all Mrs. Grundy's precepts about mere acquaintances, found a daily pretext for getting in touch with Loretta. Mr. Gibbons, busy with some financial tangle, saw little of his daughter in the day, though he made it a point to give her a part of every evening. It seemed to her that his kindness to her increased with each succeeding night, and that toward Lawrence his manner was more mellow.

One evening it happened, that Loretta was sitting alone with her father when, taking advantage of that opportune chance, he told her that he had scored a financial victory.

"You see child, you grow more and more like your mother, and it seems only natural that I should talk business to you. Why bless your soul! your mother was as big a business man as myself, indeed, in some things she was keener than I. Now, she often told me that Larry would be no good in business, but that he would do first rate at art. I have neglected him there. Indeed, Loretta, I have been thinking I might have been kinder to him. I have let him go on his own responsibility and you see the result, you get after him child, if his mother had lived

Larry would have been different; you must be a mother to him."

"Be a mother to him," she thought, what had she been during these weeks; she'd been judging him in her heart, and he knew and resented. Quite a coolness had sprung up between them—this "be a mother" to him awakened new thoughts. But the best intentions of father and sister towards Lawrence, were to be put to a severe test. One evening Mr. Gibbons returned home looking grey and stern, some bird of ill omen had revealed to him that his graceless son had deceived him as to his place of abode during his sickness, and had spent two days of that same sickness in his own house. The deceit of Lawrence did not worry her father half so much as the suspicion that Loretta had shielded her brother.

As luck would have it the two were in the parlor when Mr. Gibbons entered, Loretta sprang joyously forward, but was chilled to the heart when her father failed to return her kiss.

"Sit down Loretta, I've something to clear this instant. Lawrence, is it true that you were sick two days in this house and kept it from me?" Lawrence turned so pale Loretta in spite of herself felt sorry for him.

"Answer me sir."

"It is true I was two days sick in this house and as for keeping it from you," Lawrence spoke very slowly, as though he were thinking deeply; his father interrupted him impatiently.

"Loretta did you know your brother was sick two days in this house?"

"Yes father."

"And you deceived me for him?" but turning quickly to Lawrence as if to strike him, "you cur you made her

do it." Lawrence's look of pathetic entreaty brought back to Loretta her father's counsel "Be a mother to him." Throwing a protecting arm around her brother, she said sweetly—

"Father, I did not intend to deceive you as I did, Lawrence did not make me, no one but myself could make me do wrong." Her father wounded to the quick hastily left the room and they soon heard his heavy footsteps in his own room.

"Loretta, you stood by me like a man," said Lawrence.

"Like a man," she echoed, "I wanted to stand by you like a mother—like our own mother would have done," In spite of himself Lawrence was touched.

"You have acted like a mother, dear," he said so tenderly, as almost to shake her resolution to be honest with him.

"But Lawrence, I want you to understand I don't approve of deceit; I believed it first, and I believe it more now, we should have told father exactly how things stood. He was ready to be kind to you, he told me so; now, see what we have done. I shall always stand by you Lawrence but not by deceiving, do you understand, brother?" For a brief moment Lawrence was animated by an intense desire to be better, the desire passed and the predominant feeling was one of discomfort, his beautiful sister thought him deceitful—she thought herself better than he—what a prig she was.

"Look here Sis, you're too awfully pious, your convent training has been all wrong. You are in the world and you must do as the world does, why there isn't one fellow in a hundred that tells his father things just

straight as they are—dad didn't; I could bet my bottom dollar on it. No sir. You didn't take up Ethics?"

"No, Lawrence, I was not in the graduating class."

"Of course you weren't, that accounts for it. Now Moral Philosophy tells us that the truth is not to be told at all times." A horrified expression from Loretta made him hurry in explanation. "Never hear about mental reservation? Thought not; there are lots of things that are done in polite society that your good nuns would call deceitful. If a lady doesn't want to receive a visitor, she directs her servant to say 'not at home,' when in reality she is at home, the visitor knows that for a fact, the lady is in the house; and yet 'not at home' is not looked upon as an untruth. Now, I didn't tell an untruth, when I did not choose to inform dad I was in the house."

Loretta was in a puzzle, "It was not right, Lawrence, to keep it from him."

"Loretta, it's not a question of right, it is a question of if it was an untruth."

"No, it was not exactly."

"That's it, you acknowledge it was not an untruth," he exclaimed triumphantly.

"Lawrence, I am only a girl, I cannot argue with you; I do not know moral philosophy, I did study mental philosophy, we were to take up the other next year. But of this I am morally certain, you and I did wrong, don't let us argue about it, let us love each other, dear, and help each other heavenward;" she said and left the room.

"Gee!" he aspirated, "she took me off my feet, wished she wasn't so good, 'tis hard to keep up to her standard."

CHAPTER XI

A HEART TO HEART TALK

Loretta went to her room, and stood hesitatingly at her father's door; what made him so still, was he in bed, had he gone out? Not able to bear the pain of uncertainty, she timidly knocked, and not sure as to whether she had received a response or not, she pushed the door open and entered. Under the astral lamp on the desk, her father had thrown himself, his head on his extended arms; shocked by the suggestion of extreme grief, Loretta stood irresolute for a brief moment, then yielding to an overwhelming feeling of pity darted forward throwing her arms around him, kissed his head. When she succeeded in making him look up, she was shocked by his sorrow.

"Papa darling, why do you grieve so? I did not mean to deceive you—I wanted to keep peace between you—"

"Loretta child, I understand—he is young and naturally you love him more than you do me. I could stand that; I can't stand, that he influences you to do wrong."

"Father, listen to me, I love my brother, but papa, I love you for yourself and mamma." A look of incredulity—then with a dazzling smile of comprehension he gathered the gold-brown head to his heart.

"You little woman you, but how could you do it?"

"It was this way, dear, Lawrence was sick and weak and he feared to meet you when he was that way, and—

He frowned—"Dont, dear papa."

“But why does he fear me, why is my only son such a coward? Oh, if Roland had lived.”

“Roland,” she echoed.

“Yes, child he would be twenty-one had he lived, and there was no coward in him.”

“Papa please forgive me if I say something.”

“Say anything you please Loretta, but for God’s sake don’t deceive me.”

“Never again my darling papa. This is what I would suggest, perhaps if you were as kind to him as you are to me—

“Great Scott! how could I?” he pettishly asked.

“Yes, you could. Promise me when you meet him at breakfast tomorrow you will not refer to anything that has passed—promise,” she persisted.

“All right, little girl, I’ll be good. Look, dear,” opening a drawer of his desk and taking out a beautiful miniature, “this was your mother when I married her, she was darker than you, but you can see your features are the same.” And so in loving familiar converse the father and daughter drew closer to each other. The loud peal of the hall clock warned them it was midnight.

“Dear, dear, this will never do young lady, you will lose your roses and I my worm. You know the old adage, ‘the early bird catches the worm.’ A business man who is not an early riser is generally a failure. Don’t you attempt to get up for my breakfast.”

“Indeed I will,” she said archly, “you promised me to be good. Happy dreams.” She tripped across the hall into Lawrence’s room. He was restless in his sleep, his right arm thrown over the counterpane lay with his firm white hand tightly clasped. He was muttering to himself, bending down she caught—“and she thinks I

lied." A deep flush suffused her lovely face—"Poor fellow, I have caused pain to two that I love so"—and kneeling she lightly kissed his beautiful womanish forehead. Light as the kiss was it wakened him. He stared confusedly at her and then laughed.

"Oh, it's you, Sis! I dreamt someone kissed me."

"I did, Lawrence."

"You did? "Ha! ha! want to heal my wounded feelings did you. Want to make reparation."

"Lawrence," said she decidedly, "the only reparation I have to make is to father. Now, good night."

"Ah, gee!" he grumbled disgustedly, turning his face to the wall.

The next morning, true to his promise, Mr. Gibbons was good, so good and amiable in his manner that Lawrence for the first time in many a long day was able to carry himself gracefully before his father, and this of course delighted Loretta; by the end of the repast the father had arranged a meeting with his son at the studio of a celebrated artist preparatory to Lawrence's taking up the profession of painting.

That evening she saw a new phase in her brother's character, he reached home before his father and was in the wildest spirits.

"Say, Sis—I tell you dad can do a handsome thing when he wants to. You should have heard him talk to old Gustave. Yes, Gustave Dorelle, that's the artist. Why the old fellow just gaped at him, I believe in my heart he thinks he had a visit from Croesus or Midas, you remember those chaps in your ancient History don't you?"

"Yes, what did father say?"

"Say, what didn't he say? I had genius, my mother said I had, and he believed it. Told the artist I was as

good looking as Apollo on a bust. I've often been on the latter, but my conceit never went so far as Apollo."

"What did the artist say?" asked Loretta, delighted at the possibility of the father and son becoming friends.

"Oh, he acted as loony as most of his class do, ran his hand over his head and declared something in broken English of my being a direct descendant of the fellow on the bust. But say, Loretta, honest Injun! I believe I'll make an artist; when I showed the old Prof. a sketch of the Hudson, he actually smiled and said it had color. Oh, gee! "to Loretta's amused consternation he turned an elegant hand spring, coming safely up on two feet, not before the entrance of Mr. Sibley, who was standing at the open door in evident enjoyment of the scene.

"Oh, Sib, howdy old man, take a spring," and suiting the action to the word Lawrence gave another exhibit, not quite so successfully as the first, as he knocked down a small table before alighting on his feet.

"Thank you, Larry, I'm not accustomed to distinguish my entrance into the presence of a lady by any such an outward demonstration."

"Oh, you're not," remarked Lawrence, "no, because you can't, you'd get all tangled up in your legs, that's what. Huroo," and Lawrence was about to give another illustration of athletic ability when Mr. Sibley gripped him till he howled.

"Cease! oh thou crazy enthusiast, and remember the presence of your sister."

"Say, she's a stunner, isn't she Leo, old boy?" asked the irrepressible Lawrence.

"Define your meaning of stunner."

"Here you go, you old cut and dried—definitions

every time, I believe you haven't the soul of a turnip. You know well what a stunner is."

"I know when I'm dealing with a stunning tumbler. Do you do those stunts in that magnificent room of yours? Bye the bye, what's happened to that same room?" Loretta could not have told why she was pleased that Mr. Sibley did not speak of her beauty.

"That's true Leo, that room has been transformed, and she did that. Say, come on up and lets have a game of cards. We've an hour before dinner.

"I'll go up, Larry, but not for cards, a game of chess."

"No sir, not for mine. I've worked, son, today, I've rubbed paints in and out the whole mortal day, now I'm in for enjoyment, hence I say cards."

"And I positively decline."

"Too much work for you, Leo?" asked Lawrence with a shrewd look at his companion, the latter seeming strangely embarrassed, turned abruptly, and said shortly—

"If you're going upstairs, Larry, come on."

Loretta heard her brother in his ascent loudly expatiating on the beauties of his room. Pleased with this indirect mode of showing his gratitude, Loretta stood absorbed in thought. Finally after settling some knotty problem in her mind, she called Nurse and told her to see that there was an extra plate laid on the dinner table, as she was going out for a short time.

CHAPTER XII

LOOKING FOR A COUNSELLOR

Like her father in that when she made up her mind, she never hesitated, she walked directly to the Jesuit College, and finding the hall door ajar, pushed it in and entered the wide vestibule. She stood there waiting, till a tall austere old Jesuit passing from one parlor to another, seeing the young girl, approached her with a grave “Do you wish some one?” The dark face when he spoke lost some of its stern lines and his dark-brown eyes were kind.

“Yes, Father, I wish to speak to some one—I want advice.”

“Ah! you want advice—I shall call Father Andrews.”

“Pardon Father—could not you do as well?”

He smiled—how very beautiful his smile was and how very fleeting, he stood before her, silent, dark, stern, a grand picture of strength physical and spiritual, then with a bow of unconscious grace said—

“As you like Miss——”

“Miss Gibbons, or Loretta if you will, I am only a girl,” she extended her hand which he took in a firm grasp and then led her into a small parlor.

“Well now Miss—Loretta, since you so wish it; what is the nature of the advice needed?”

She hesitated—“Well, Father, if you could get me a teacher—to teach me Moral Philosophy?” The shadow of a smile flitted over his most expressive face.

“Moral Philosophy?” he echoed, “a rather heavy study for a young lady.”

“Yes, Father, I need it, I need it to know my duties.”

How young and childlike she looked, yet how womanly and decided.

“Duties as to matrimony,” he suggested. Without a blush she dismissed that subject and soon, not exactly knowing how it was done, she found herself talking to Father Dusette as though she had known him all her life. He knew her brother, knew him to be wild and ungovernable, knew him to be expelled from college; and told her all this gently and kindly. Told it to her because if she were to be a mother to him, it was well for her to know him as he was. Before the eventful interview ended, Loretta knew if she had lost a wise counsellor in Sister Ambrose, she had found another in Father Dusette. He would procure a teacher for her, one of their graduates—a middle aged man who needed the money and he, Father Dusette, would pray for the success of her mission—the conversion of her father and brother. And so with a light heart Loretta bade him good bye. But before going home she paid a visit to the Church. Absorbed in prayer and retrospection, the time flew and not till the sexton in the dim twilight of the Sanctuary, half stumbled over her, did she realize how late was the hour. Then it flashed across her, filling her with consternation—she was late for dinner. As luck would have it, ’twas impossible for her to find a cab, and hurry as she would, the dessert was on the table before dressed in her walking attire, she entered the dining room.

Three gloomy men sat toying with their sweetmeats, each feeling in some undefinable way that he was responsible for the absence of the hostess.

“Queer she should take this way to punish a fellow”—thought Lawrence bitterly.

“Perhaps she objects to me. She did not invite me,” thought Mr. Sibley.

“Getting tired of me,”—pathetically mused the father. No one gave voice to his thought; each outwardly acted the gentleman, but very stiff grave gentlemen, when the sudden appearance of their girlish hostess brought all three to their feet.

“Well, well child, where have you been?” eagerly cried her father. “No, no, never mind your hat, sit right down as you are. Pardon you, you say? Of course I’ll pardon you; but never let it happen again, we three were about to do something desperate. Eh! Mr. Sibley?”

“I don’t know about you, Mr. Gibbons, but I remember Miss Gibbons had not endorsed Lawrence’s invitation to dinner and I——”

“Mr. Sibley,” exclaimed Loretta, “I thought I made you understand, endorsements were unnecessary. Lawrence’s invitation was all that was needed. But since you have been worrying about it, I intended to send up an invitation from myself, but in getting ready to go out neglected it. Hungry? Of course I am. But you have all finished?”

“Not by a long shot. Lucy bring in some fresh plates. We’re going to have dinner now,” gaily cried Lawrence.

Released from their unpleasant tension of doubt the three tried to vie with one another, and Loretta laughed gaily at their sallies, but the soft quick touch of Nurse, her whispered message into Loretta’s ear put an end to pleasure and brought the latter to her feet.

“What’s up now?” pettishly demanded her father. “Nurse will not another time do? Loretta hasn’t finished her dinner.”

“Yes, dear papa, I have finished. You have your smoke and I will meet you in the parlor,” replied Loretta hastily following Nurse into the hall.

CHAPTER XIII

LAWRENCE SEEMS TO LACK PRINCIPLE.

“Well, Nurse, what dreadful thing is it?”

“There’s a man upstairs who will not leave this house till his bill of fifty dollars be paid,” solemnly explained Nurse.

“Oh, Nurse, that is all right, I’ll ask Papa,” and Loretta turned to re-enter the dining room, but Nurse in consternation arrested her saying,

“For God’s sake listen, Loretta, this is Lawrence’s bill, and the fat would be in the fire, if you were to ask your father to pay it now just as they are beginning to be friends.” Loretta stood still in uncertainty—“but Nurse if we explain—”

“I tell you you can’t explain, the bill is money lost at billiards and your brother has refused to pay but if the thing comes to your father’s ears, he’ll be tearing. He looks upon such things as disgraceful.”

“And so they are.” Loretta’s face was stern. “But Nurse, I haven’t the money. You—”

“I haven’t a cent. I paid the last I had out this morning. Look here, haven’t you a bracelet or a necklace?”

“Bracelet or necklace?” wondrously repeated Loretta, “of course I have; with mamma’s I have many.”

“No, no, none of your mamma’s, one of your own. Give it to me and I’ll tell him to take that for the money, hurry dear.”

“Nurse, that doesn’t seem right, I don’t like it,” hesitated Loretta.

“Well in God’s name, what will you do? Go in and tell Mr. Gibbons and have him get in a rage with Lawrence?”

“Can he not wait until tomorrow?” cried Loretta in desperation.

“No, I tell you, he won’t leave the house. Go up, dear, and get it,” coaxed Nurse.

With a sad heart Loretta got the bracelet and gave it to Nurse in payment of the debt; with a sadder heart she entered the parlor. Her father greeted her entrance with a questioning look, determined not to cause him anxiety, she stooped over him and said—

“I’ll tell you all about it before bed time.” He was satisfied—but by a strange arrangement of fate a gentleman called on important business, a few minutes after, had a private interview with her father, and in less than an hour Mr. Gibbons, accompanied by his friend, left the house for a week’s absence. Loretta breathed freer after his departure; ’twas a respite, and in the meantime she might see Father Dusette.

But before calling on him she told Lawrence what she did. Her brother was very angry.

“Great Scott! what did you pay it for? The cur! I wouldn’t give Jim Reynolds one cent if I were rolling in wealth.”

“Lawrence, didn’t you owe it to him?”

“Owe the devil! No I didn’t.”

“You did not,” she exclaimed in astonishment, “why how could he send a man for it?”

“Oh, he claims I did,” pettishly answered Lawrence.

Her brother had some queer modes of reasoning, but determined to understand the facts as they stood, Loretta said with great dignity,

“Lawrence, I paid that bill and I wish you to tell me, why this Reynolds thought you owed it to him.”

“Well we played a game and bet twenty-five on it, and I lost, that was honest—then we played another game and he lost—he said he didn’t; but he lied and—and Sib—”

“Was Mr. Sibley there?” she questioned.

Lawrence looked embarrassed.

“Yes—he was there.”

“What did he think?”

“Oh! the muff—he was watching the first part of the game and when it came to the last he wasn’t there.”

“He had gone then,” she insisted.

“Oh no,—he was there—but his mind was some place else because when I got mad and told Jim I’d see him in —— I beg pardon, an uncomfortably hot place, before I’d pay him a cent——”

“Yes?” she gently questioned.

“Well, old Sib steps up and says Jim didn’t cheat.”

“If Mr. Sibley said so it must be true.”

He looked keenly at her. “For the short time you know him, you seem to think a heap of him.”

“I believe him to be an honest man,” she quietly asserted. He laughed.

“And so do I. All the same he didn’t know about that game; and I would not have given Jim one red cent. The damned cur sending to the house for it.” He stood with his hands in his pockets and whistled.

“Lawrence, if I had not paid it, Father would have known.”

He wheeled around. “Gee, it would have been all up with me—’twas handsome of you Sis.”

How sweet was his praise, this degenerate brother of hers.

“But, Lawrence, Father is going to know about it.”

“Going to snitch, eh?” he asked disgustedly. Her cheeks burned, how insolent he could be, this spoiled son of fortune.

“Call it what you like, Lawrence, I promised father I would never keep anything from him again. I will tell him this.”

“Oh, hell!” he growled and turning on his heel left the room. His manner, his words all grated on her sense of right, of courtesy, of honor, and for the first time in her life, she shed the tears that women in sorrow let fall. When her agony had ceased her first impulse was to write it all to Sister Ambrose. No, she could not do it, written words are so cold and severe, the tone of voice may often palliate the greatest sin and sister would understand could she speak to her—it would not do to write it. Father Dusette? Yes, that was the one, stopping long enough to bathe her swollen lids, she repaired to the College. Carefully shielding her brother’s character as much as she could consistently do with truth, she laid the facts before the priest.

“Well, my child, ’tis a difficult thing to advise on—if you do not handle Lawrence carefully, your influence for good will be as naught. He is high strung—has been let run wild; with the best intentions in the world, Nurse has helped to spoil him—and—why child how is this? I thought you a brave little woman. Come, come, this will never do. You are keeping something from me. What is it child?

“Father I hate to say it—but Lawrence seems not to be—honest,” she sobbed.

A look of intense sympathy swept across his stern face.

“That need not shock you my child; some otherwise good persons are deficient in the strict sense of honor, sometimes 'tis in the make up of a man, occasionally his environments develop it, and again 'tis a lack of character. A man is only responsible for that of which he is conscious. In my dealings with your brother, I found him lacking in the principle of honor.”

“How shocking,” gasped Loretta. “If he is not conscious of wrong doing, how can we work with him Father?”

“That’s just it. I am not certain yet if the deficit is in himself or his education. Of course, if the latter, we can easily effect a cure; if the former,” he shook his head while Loretta, pale with agony, gasped despairingly at him.

“Courage my child. God expects great things of you. Your brother is not so great a sinner as St. Augustine, who at one time seemed lost to every sense of right, and prayer converted him. Prayer—that is the secret”—he stood erect, his noble head thrown back, his face glorious in its transfiguration of Faith. His enthusiasm took hold of Loretta.

“Father, if it is prayer—I shall pray my knees off.”

Brought back to earth he gently smiled. “Softly, softly, little enthusiast. There are different kinds of prayers, the prayer of self sacrifice, every action of the day, every heart beat offered for the one great object. If I understand you rightly—you have not many temptations—but this one, is something peculiar to untried woman—the temptation to discouragement. No matter how dark things may look, keep up your courage.”

“Thank you, Father,” she said gratefully, “and about that debt, shall I tell my father?”

He thought a moment and then said—“Yes, it is best to be open and above board in all your dealings with your father. But take an opportune moment—when he is happy and alone with you—get him to promise not to refer to it when speaking to Lawrence.”

The opportune moment did not present itself for a long time, the man of business for a time absorbed the father, he seemed to have no time for anything, meals were bolted without conversation, the evenings spent at home were given to the private secretary and great bundles of papers—to Loretta he was kind, but in such a hurry that there was no opportunity of a private talk with him.

One morning as she helped him into his overcoat, he found time to grumble—“Now if Lawrence were worth his salt, he could help me in this pinch and I wouldn’t be driven like a pack horse. Why God bless me, Loretta, I haven’t had breathing space to ask you how you were. After tomorrow, we’ll see more of each other. What are you doing with yourself?”

“Papa—I am studying with a teacher,” she said hurriedly.

“Studying with a teacher!” He had been putting on his hat at the hall looking-glass and glanced over his shoulder at her in blank amazement. “What study and what teacher?” he queried.

“Mr. Clark, Father Dusette got him for me—he is teaching me Moral Philosophy.”

He whistled softly, “Moral Philosophy. Anything you please little girl, but don’t get too smart for your old dad.”

“I could never be so smart as you are, papa,” she answered with naivete. Pleased at her honest appreciation, he raised his hat and kissing her fondly said,

“You’re the best little woman in New York.”

CHAPTER XIV

KATE THROWS A BOMB

A couple of months passed and the intimacy of the families waxed apace. Anyone with the slightest conception of character could see that the father and son paid great attention to Mrs. Harcourt, although the son seemed to be dead in earnest; anybody, save Loretta, could understand that the widow favored the father. He, to do him justice, had not seen through the matrimonial scheme, but Kate sincerely loving Loretta was deeply pained, the convent girl was happy, however, in her blissful unconsciousness and the event of the bracelet episode was nearly forgotten when one of the wonderful happenings of the unexpected, brought the affair to light. Kate, owing to pressure of social duties, had neglected making her daily visits and Mr. Gibbons, who by this time had conceived quite an affection for her, was grumbling about her non-appearance, when the young lady in question joyously entered.

"How are you all?" she gaily asked. It seems an age since I saw you, but today after my beauty sleep I determined to come." Sitting down and clasping her beautiful hands together on her knees, leaning forward and speaking confidentially to her host, "Is not society tiresome? Mr. Gibbons, if you had your most ardent desire—would it not be to cut free from these stupid traditions and spend your life right in the home circle?"

"Right you are, Miss Kate, there's no place like home, especially when home is graced by two such stunning girls as you and Loretta."

Kate laughed. "Is not he a dear, Loretta? I am sure when he was the age of your brother he must have been a gallant knight."

"Are you suggesting young lady that I've reached, or am about to reach, 'the sear and yellow leaf, age?'" asked Mr. Gibbons in affected dignity.

"Indeed no, you are just in your prime. I was suggesting—no I never suggest, I just say what I mean. I mean that when you were younger that you were more given to pay compliments."

"So I'm led to infer that I have been negligent on that score," solemnly demanded Mr. Gibbons, while Loretta, always a quiet and amused listener to these encounters between Kate and her father looked lovingly on, and Lawrence lounged lazily in the depth of an easy chair and seemed to doze.

"Not in respect to myself, mine host, I do not remember ever receiving so glowing eulogy as a 'stunning girl.' But to go back to our point in question, you admit that society is irksome to you, yet, when my precious parent, a devotee at the shrine of all things social told you that Loretta being tall for her age should come out very shortly, you actually assented to the absurd suggestion. Acknowledge that you did sir," she laughingly commanded.

"Yes, Miss Kate, I did. What can a poor man do when such a magnificent proposition as your mother gets after him? Bye the bye, she looks almost as young as yourself."

"Well ma is not so very much older than I. I have just reached my maturity, eighteen, and ma is just twenty-three years older than I."

"Humph, that makes her only forty-one. She has still

a great social life before her. In her regard we cannot say society is dull," he queried.

"No, ma is charming in every respect, and yet I have only been out a short time and I am very weary."

"Young lady, you have been sitting up too late last night or something has happened," laughed Mr. Gibbons.

"Yes, you wonderful prophet, something did happen," cried Kate.

"What was it Kate? tell us," Loretta was all animation.

"Well, I did something that was contrary to my principles."

"Kate I couldn't believe it of you," smiled Loretta.

"Well all the same I did. At supper when the almonds were placed on the table, of course, that stupid custom of Philippino was started. What was it?" In answer to a query from Loretta, "If you find a double nut in a shell you eat one and at the same time the one with whom you are going to play, eats the other. The object after the nuts are disposed of is to see which will catch the other by either answering yes or no, or giving or taking something."

"There's nothing wrong in that," suggested Loreetta.

"No, nothing wrong, but I dislike begging—"

"Begging," vociferated Mr. Gibbons, "you ought to spend an afternoon in my office. 'Tis first the Little Sisters of the Poor, Good Shepherd Nuns, Franciscans, the Lord knows what all, begging for their dear little children, their old men, their sick, and I have to give them all something."

"You dear," murmured Kate, her eyes like stars.

"Oh, bless your soul there's no virtue in it. No man with any heart in him could say no to those sweet faced

women. If they'd ask me for the moon, I'd try to get it for them."

"What a mercy the nuns donot realize their power Loretta, you would be on the begging list in a very short time."

"Why do you object to beggars, Kate?" seriously asked Loretta.

"If you mean begging nuns, I do not object to them. Those Religious are the sweetest things in your Church, Loretta. I refer to the Philippine gifts, lawn socials, card parties, and the like. Apropos of the Catholic Sisterhood, did you ever read Charles Dickens' testimony to them? 'Twas an article that appeared in 'Household Words,' in answer to criticisms on the many mendicant orders of the Church. 'Twas a begging that cost something to their individual pride, 'twas a continual offering to God of their own self esteem, for the benefit of others; with no return beyond the satisfaction of helping others; while our Church organizations, the criticizing element, practice wholesale beggary under the guise of charity, make money and enjoy themselves without any loss of self esteem. Do you understand, Loretta?"

"Yes. How kind of Dickens to write that way about the sisters," smiled Loretta.

"Humph! he isn't the only man that could bear testimony to those noble women. Of course, every man can't hold a pen in his fist and write big words, but—"

"There, he can praise them just as splendidly as ever Charles did," cooed Kate.

"Well how about your principles?" drawled Lawrence.

"Like all long winded speakers, I almost lost the thread of my discourse. I was telling about Lill's party.

Well, contrary to all my strong sentiments on the subject of begging, I was drawn into a game of Philippine, but as my partner was as determined as myself not to be caught, we roused the interest of the whole party. Being put on my mettle, I finally won, much to my gratified disgust, and Mr. Gibbons, this morning before I was up, my gift came."

"In a hurry to pay his debt, lucky dog! don't blame him. Wouldn't mind playing a game with you myself, Miss Kate," smiled Mr. Gibbons. "What was the gift?"

"Here it is, a bracelet, I brought it over to show you. Jim Reynolds gave it. The strangest thing the initials on the monogram are L. G.—Loretta's, you see. At first, I didn't realize that this was a monogram, it looks just like an ornament, does it not?" Kate and Mr. Gibbons leaned in interest over a handsome bracelet. Loretta and Lawrence were both stiff and tense with suspense.

"Strange, it looks like the mate to the pair I bought Loretta. Child have you the other?" asked her father.

"No, Father," stammered Loretta. Was the floor moving, what ailed everything? Kate, the quick-witted, saw Loretta's agitation, was not slow to conjecture that Loretta owned the bracelet and that there was trouble connected with it; so with ready tact she at once discovered it was growing late and as the car was at the door she had better be going. No, she did not need an escort she had brought over Molly.

Mr. Gibbons, annoyed at Kate's precipitated departure, and mystified by the monogram on the bracelet Kate had purposely left it in his hands, said pettishly,

"Well, what does this mean anyhow?" and looking up he caught a most expressive glance pass between brother and sister. "Good God! Another damnable trick. What

does this mean sir?" yelled the thoroughly exasperated father.

"She will explain," said Lawrence, and hastily vanished.

Mr. Gibbons, keenly aroused, was as indignant with Loretta as with Lawrence, would at first listen to nothing, told her he had lost confidence in her, she had no word of honor and many other bitter things. Shrinking from him because of her love for him, Loretta was dumb till he evoked a spark of his own spirit, then facing him she spoke earnestly, so earnestly that convinced in spite of himself, he finally promised to have patience with Lawrence. But do what he would, after that denouement, Mr. Gibbons could not remove a certain stiffness from his manner when dealing with his son, and this constraint had the effect on Lawrence of increasing his fear of his father, and of making him put on the abject air of shrinking from him.

Loretta felt her only recourse in this sad state of affairs was to redouble the prayers. Sister Ambrose had impressed her with the truth that assisting devoutly at Mass was the greatest act she could perform, so Loretta made it a point never to miss the daily Mass.

While the young mistress was praying, Mrs. Harcourt had grown in this interval of time to be a dominant factor in the Gibbons household, Lawrence having proposed to her was laughingly rejected; her plans aimed higher. Loretta must be disposed of first and the best means for such disposal was an early marriage for the young girl. So when in accordance with these plans, Mrs. Harcourt suggested one evening, that Loretta's debut should be anticipated a year, the father, at least, cordially assented. Loretta who had found in this short twelve

months of her American life her duties were such as to encroach on the time she desired to give her father, his conversion being the main object of her life, strongly objected to the proposed debut. At this point of the discussion Mrs. Harcourt and Kate left the Gibbons household to hold a council of war; for towards the end, peace hung in the balance.

"Father," pleaded Loretta, "one would think you were tiring of my company."

"Not at all my child; of course I grant I'll probably be in danger of losing you altogether," he mused.

"Why, what do you mean?" cried Loretta, her cheeks tinted with the wild rose, while Lawrence grinned knowingly.

"In the course of natural events, my child, you will eventually leave your old dad. Indeed if I wasn't as stiff as Lucifer with some of the swells that come here, you'd have been gone long ago."

"Yes, Leo seems dead struck on her, if I know what is what."

"Hush Lawrence," aspirated Loretta, and returning to the subject of the debate. "Father do you really mean to have me come out next month?"

"Sure thing, Mrs. Harcourt—"

"What has she got to do with it, father? Why is she so interested?"

"It is for her interest that she is interested in yours," cynically observed Lawrence. Loretta stared at him.

"I don't understand Larry."

"No, of course, you don't. I guess your Convent training didn't explain along those lines," sneered Lawrence. Mr. Gibbons, with knit brows and eyes, keenly

alert, was studying his son. "What are you insinuating sir?" he angrily asked.

"I'm talking plain English, father. 'Tis common talk of the town the game Mrs. Harcourt is playing."

"Damn it, what game?"

"Why you and your money." A sudden dash and an uplifted arm were too suggestive for Lawrence, and Loretta found herself alone with her father.

"Damn his impudence. Talk of the town, I'd like to string up some of those gossips, blame me if I wouldn't," growled her father. Loretta sat in a silent horrified maze. Intelligent comprehension slowly dawning on her till her father, having fussed and fumed himself into something like reason, caught her thoughtful expression.

"Loretta, my child, you don't believe it?"

"Believe what, Father?" she gently asked.

"Why, why hang it, you know what Lawrence said?"

"About Mrs. Harcourt? I do not know, father, she does love money."

Her father rose with dignity and asked, "Loretta, have I ever given you a moment's suspicion that I ever intended putting anyone in your mother's place?"

"No, father."

"Well then forget it. I don't know what the devil ails Lawrence," looking at his watch, "Great Scott, I am late—due at a meeting," and so saying, with a hasty kiss he hurried from the room.

CHAPTER XV

THE CONVENT SUNSHINE IN MODERN PAGANISM.

Long, long after Loretta sat thinking, her heart was heavy, what was the matter with the world anyhow? How could she respect Mrs. Harcourt, if the debut was but a plan to allow that woman to have more time with her father? How could Mrs. Harcourt be decent and scheme so? And then Lawrence. Was this the world the Jesuit Father at one of the Retreats, in fact her last one, meant when he told them to carry out into the world with them the sunshine of the Convent. How vividly his words came back.

“The world needs you my children. There are souls out there in that maelstrom of temptation waiting for such as you, waiting for you, pure souls, bred in the sunshine of God’s grace, waiting for you to carry that same sunshine to make light in the dark shadows of many a tempted soul; you must be as light-houses shining on the black waters of an evil world. A world as wicked as was the ancient empire of Rome; dances, movies, undress,—unsex the women. You do not know sin, as sin exists there. God grant that you may never know, but this I tell you, kneeling in the sunshine of the Blessed Sacrament, ask Christ to make you real Convent girls; not shams! Be the real article! the genuine, unselfish, self-sacrificing, and prayerful convent girl. Count that day lost which is not marked by kind acts. Let your mission be to carry into a sinful world the sunshine of Christ.”

Surely that was the shadow of sin, that a Christian woman should be scheming, to turn the Sacrament of

Marriage into a business deal. Oh, it was horrible. Was she the Convent girl, had she carried light? Oh, no, she was good for nothing, she had no influence even on her brother, who if he were nothing worse seemed to have no higher ideal than pleasure, and, yet, she had lived and grown in the Sanctuary for sixteen years. Why! the Apostles only had three. "Oh, my Convent, my beautiful Convent, is it all lost, all for nothing, the teaching I received? No, in His strength, in His light I must effect something good."

Across the waters in the dim lighted Chapel Sister Amrose knelt in the sunshine of the Sanctuary lamp and prayed.

CHAPTER XVI
A. LOVE STORY BY A LOVER

One misty morning as Loretta and Nurse were returning from Mass, the former heard a familiar voice calling her, and turning saw Kate's face, at her auto window.

"Why child, what wonderful mission are you on?" Loretta smiled. "Might I not ask the same of you, Kate?"

"Ah dear, I have no mission. I am dead tired, but not sick at heart, a little fearful, though. Come get in; glad to see you Nurse. You look as fresh as those Irish posies you tell me about."

"Ah be aisy, Miss Kate, 'tis yourself kissed the Blarney Stone." Kate laughed and turning to Loretta said, "Of course you can judge from my attire whence I came, and you?"

"From Mass, you know," answered Loretta simply.

"What a darling you are, is not she Nurse?" said Kate, gazing at Loretta affectionately. "A year has changed you greatly. Do you know you look five years older."

"Why shouldn't she? Taking the whole house on her back," said Nurse earnestly. Loretta turned to her fondly, patted her hand, turned again to Kate, and said,

"Five years? Sometimes I feel ten years older not because I have the house on my back though, our darling old Nurse carries that. I think, I have grown older since father has found out about your mother. Do you think, Kate, she notices any change in him?"

"Yes, Loretta," answered Kate, "Ma is quick to

sense things and I think she feels instinctively there is no hope for her in that quarter. It is shocking to speak this way of your mother, but as I know her main object in trying to marry money is mainly for me, I must forgive her. Just now I am awfully happy and in an awful tangle too. You have grown so mature, I feel I can tell you—and yet—you have never been in love.”

“In love,” echoed Loretta in mock indignation, “of course I have been in love.”

“With whom?” asked the astonished Kate while Nurse, with genuine surprise depicted on her most expressive face, looked at Loretta.

“With father, Lawrence, Nurse, you.”

“Nonsense, child, that is not the love I mean, now if you were a year older—”

“Kate Harcourt, how old are you?”

“Nineteen and in my twentieth year.”

“I am seventeen, in my eighteenth year.”

“Yes, but in experience, worldliness and all that goes with them, I am nineteen, plus ten. Yet, you have such a keen sympathy with poor, suffering humanity, I believe you would understand.”

“Is it a case of suffering?” eagerly cried Loretta.

“No, you mother dove, it is a case of pure happiness. Listen then, Loretta, to my love story.” Like a pleased child at the mere mention of a story Loretta leaned eagerly forward. Nurse was in a small ecstasy. “A year before you came from France, dear heart, I met my fate.”

“You knew him all that time and did not tell me?” said Loretta reproachfully.

“Look at that now,” said Nurse, “Ah, Miss Kate, you’re the deep one.”

“Nurse,” cried Kate, “if you ever tell my secret—”

“Is it me? Me tell a secret?” echoed Nurse with dignity.

“Oh, go on Kate,” laughed Loretta. “Nurse will never tell. You knew all that time?”

“I KNEW him, but I wasn’t certain of his LOVE for me until last night, or I should say this morning.”

“Is it fixed?” delightedly cried Loretta. Nurse beamed. Kate’s face grew grave.

“Ah, ‘there’s the rub,’ Loretta, Nurse, dearie, my boy is poor, only a reporter on the Herald and you know how that will go with Ma. Where did I meet him?” she laughed. “I was at Atlantic Beach, sitting on the sands right in the blazing sun, not having any complexion, I do not have to worry about losing it—yes, I have to be careful about my nose, a big nose, when it gets tinted with the warm rays of the sun is not pretty.”

“Oh, Kate, stop ruminating and tell us your story,” laughed Loretta.

“Where was I? Oh, yes, sitting in the sand, eating an apple and dreaming, but oh, such an awakening—a big wave broke all over me and my dreams: you should have seen me, Loretta, drenched from the crown of my gipsy hat to the tip of my pretty foot—that is one thing pretty I have—and salt water oozing from ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and in this poetic niobe pose, my fate found me,” she laughed, “John Russell, you know him.”

“Well he says he did fall in love with me then and there and such a picture as I made,” unconscious of the fact that particular moment was one of beauty for Kate, her eyes sparkling with amusement, her brown cheeks a brilliant red, her drenched hat, even adding its charm, as having lost its stiffness, it clung tightly to her handsome head and brought out its fine outlines.”

“Well, how did he tell you?” naively asked Loretta.

“Tell me, bless you for an innocent child, listen to her, Nurse.” Nurse laughed. “You do not think he told me then. No, he simply walked up to me, hat in hand and asked without a glimmer of amusement in his beautiful eyes if he could be of help to me. I told him I really did not know how he could help, except to wring me out. Then he did laugh. It may have been the saving of him, that laugh. He asked if he could go to the hotel for a change of clothes for me. I protested. I could have stood there forever in my wet duds, gazing at him, Loretta, gazing at an honest, good man. That is what I saw, a man, a true man, big, sturdy, blond, dressed in neat but poor clothes, but a gentleman. After that chance encounter we frequently met, although the proud gentleman made it a point to tell me the only reason that brought him to Atlantic City (he did not belong to the rich set there) was that the Herald had sent him as a substitute for a sick reporter on the Seymour Divorce case. He, John, hated the thing, hates anything like divorce. His was political speeches, but of course, being an employee he had to do what he was told. Whenever ma saw him with me, she tried to freeze him out, but he would not be froze. Last night at the ball he declared himself, when utterly wretched he could not keep it from me. He wanted me for his wife. How I admired him at that moment. He said he knew he was a poor man and I was a rich girl (people, you know, believe us wealthy) but that did not count before God. He told me he was a good man, as good as he knew how to be. He had never loved another woman; ‘’twas a maiden passion for a maid.’ He wanted me and he was going to get me, if I loved him.”

“Look at that now, glory be!” delightedly cried Nurse, while Kate continued,

“He had hesitated long before he told me, because he had to fight a big temptation with his pride: dreaded what the world would say: marrying for money, but he conquered all pride and he was going to act honestly before God and man. He was going to marry me.”

“Ah, that’s the boy, God bless him,” cried Nurse.

“You ought to have seen his delight when I told him I was not wealthy. But what do you think he said? He could not and he would not, mind you, marry ME if I did not become a Catholic.”

“Asthere, that’s a man, every inch of him. That’s the Catholic, for you. Oh, Miss Kate, go down on your knees every night and thank God for such a man,” cried Nurse.

“Kate, I’ve been praying for you to become a Catholic,” joyously chimed in Loretta.

“Well, keep on Loretta, and Nurse, you storm heaven, because when I told him I would become a Christian Scientist if it pleased him, he gravely informed me that that faith would not count, that I would have to become a Catholic through conviction, not for him.”

“Look at that now,” delightedly cried Nurse.

“But the tug-of-war is on when he tells my precious ma.”

“Ah, the fat’s in the fire when he tells your ma, Miss Kate. Nothing will suit her but ‘multi.’ There’s nothin’ for you to do but to run off with him,” the nurse was so serious that the two girls laughed heartily.

“But what on earth brings Mr. Sibley out this time of the morning?” asked Kate as Mr. Sibley, with uplifted hat and a radiant smile rapidly passed them. “There is

a man, Loretta, that is a mystery. He has lots of good in him, most interesting, yet I have heard rumors—I am afraid he gambles. No, it is nothing dreadful, but not quite respectable, however, be kind to him Loretta, he strikes me as a man who has a sorrow. Well, good-bye dear heart, pray for me, do not forget Nurse. Tell your father? Oh dear no, Loretta, it must be kept quiet until I am a Catholic. I will have to see Father Dusette at once. Bless you child! if John says he will not marry me unless I belong to his Church, he means every word of it.”

Interested deeply in this new insight into the workings of the human heart, Loretta entered the dining room and greeted her father. His surprise when he noticed her walking attire reminded her she had forgotten her usual precaution of taking off her wraps.

“What’s this? Out this time in the morning? Trying to get ahead of your old dad? Been down to see about stocks?”

“Perhaps you think I know nothing about them, but I can take stock in some things,” she answered gaily. He smiled at her and asked if Lawrence had risen?

“No, dear papa, he came in late last night with Mr. Sibley.”

“With Sibley, did you say?” he shook his head. “Lawrence is too much with that fellow. I don’t like it.”

“What is wrong with Mr. Sibley?” asked Loretta.

“That’s just it, I don’t know whether I can explain what is wrong with Sibley. He seems a nice fellow, clever, very clever, reserved in fact; that is it; I have hit the nail on the head. Why the dickens is the fellow so reserved? Why don’t we know more about him? Without being dressed to kill he’s always gentlemanly looking—without showing any great externals of wealth no one can point a

finger at him and say he is poor. No man can tell what he does for a living."

"Is he not a lawyer, papa?" asked Loretta.

"Yes, I believe he dabbles in law. I happened last year to go into Judge Cumming's office and Sibley was attorney for the defendant. 'Twas a poor affair. Another time at a political meeting, I saw Sibley taking shorthand notes and some years past it was rumored that he was getting money on the baize."

"On the baize, papa?" echoed Loretta.

"Yes, gambling, in fact, I know he did gamble. Samson said he did."

"Is that wrong, papa?"

"It's not wrong, but it's not respectable, especially if he cheats."

"Oh, father, he never does that?" indignantly retorted Loretta.

"Well, perhaps he doesn't. I rather like the fellow, he seems decent but I am afraid his past is shady. I was thinking seriously of forbidding him to come to the house, but, as he seems to have enough sense not to wear his welcome out, I haven't made any objection, but I don't think his influence on Lawrence is the best."

"Father, I have seen little of Mr. Sibley, probably in this whole year that I have spent since I left school, I have not had more than a dozen conversations with him, but I found him very interesting. Oh, he knows so much, there is not a subject you can touch on that he cannot tell you something about—and I cannot believe a man of such research would be hurtful to Lawrence." She spoke earnestly. Her father glanced keenly at her, with a good bit of his wall street alertness, but she bore the inspection with calmness apparently unconscious of his scrutiny. Satis-

fied that Loretta was not unduly interested in Mr. Sibley, her father said,

“Yes, I grant you Mr. Sibley is clever, and his companionship might be good for Lawrence if the other part of him is as good as he is—well, clever.”

“I think he is both, father,” she answered with simple dignity. “We should not brand him as bad till we are positive that he is. You know what Shakespear says,

‘Who steals my purse steals trash,

But he who steals my good name—’ ”

“I guess that’s about right, girlie. We’ll give the poor dog a chance till we find he is a cur. But, Loretta, I am worried lately very much about Lawrence. Do you know I am beginning to think as Nurse would say, ‘There’s a bad drop in him.’ I don’t know where it comes from, on both sides, both mine and his mother’s, are good sterling stock. What it is, I don’t know.”

“Papa,” she timidly suggested, “you know Lawrence ought to be a Catholic. He made his First Communion, you know. I think the whole trouble with him is religion, or rather the want of it.” ’Twas the first time since they knew each other that she broached the subject.

He gazed blankly at her, then reddened.

“Oh, I don’t know, religion never bothered me very much. I’ve been honest all my life; why, if I did the contemptible things Larry did, I’d kick myself; and I very rarely darken the church door. Am I not a respectable member of society, Loretta?”

There was an anxious ring in his inquiry which touched her deeply. What should she say?—to her, her father was perfect in love and devotion—but to God, had the time come to speak plainly? Might she not wound him so severely as to estrange him. Noticing her silence,

and taking for granted that she could not give a satisfactory answer, he started up suddenly from the table with a suppressed sigh. Intuition is one of woman's prerogatives. Loretta understood and knew then and there the moment was inopportune.

"Papa, do you ask me if you are a respectable member of society? I think you are an ornament. Tell me if you have time, what has Larry done lately."

"Well, I stopped at Gustave Dorrell's studio yesterday to see what progress Larry had made in the last six months and actually the fellow hasn't done a tap but begin and rub out. Old Dorrell says he has great talent, but that he is so confoundedly lazy that he accomplishes nothing; and the worst of it is, he actually dotes on the rascal. When I threatened to stop the lessons he nearly got on his knees."

"Maybe the poor man needs the money," she suggested.

"Not by a long shot. He has all the pupils he can handle. Suppose you drop in there some day and see what the boy is doing. I wish to the Lord he would take it in his head to marry."

This suggestion brought back Kate's love story; was matrimony in the air? "Papa, Lawrence can not do much now to support himself, what would he do if he had a wife?" she asked.

"A blamed sight better. I tell you it takes a wife to make many a man. If that fellow had to hustle, perhaps he would show us some. Now if he took a fancy to Kate—"

"Larry does not care for Kate, at all," said Loretta in her most decided tones.

“He doesn’t hey, did he tell you so?” he asked eagerly.

“Yes, papa, he took a dislike to her the first time they met, and he seems still to be impressed by it.”

“Anyone else in the wind?”

“Not that I know of, father.”

“Strange,” he mused, “there is no house in the town that Larry spends more time at than the Harcourts. Isn’t that so?”

“Not now, father, he seems to have stopped going.”

CHAPTER XVII

A REVELATION OF SOUL

Lawrence, petted by all his women friends, was decidedly peeved by Mrs. Harcourt's good humored rejection. His pride, hurt more than his heart, came to his rescue, and he soon solaced his wounded feelings, with another and younger love. Loretta, too simple to understand what went on between Mrs. Harcourt and Lawrence, was horrified to learn the truth from the astute Kate, although in her brother's case, the older woman was guiltless of any scheming, being thoroughly in earnest in her attack on Mr. Gibbons' affections, this fact did not console Loretta.

To the convent girl, early impressed with the fitness of things, with the serious aspect of all things holy, this light holding of the sacrament of matrimony was little less than sacrilegious.

When a short while after, Kate's information had sunk deep in Loretta's heart, she was truly shocked by Lawrence's flippant request that she should accompany him to the theatre to see his best girl.

"Best girl, Larry? Did you have a better?"

"Sure Mike. Good, better, best, but Trixy is the best ever. Go get ready, I have the tickets and as Dad is out of town, we'll take in the play and then go to Shanley's with Trixy to an oyster supper."

With a strange misgiving of something wrong, Loretta asked who Trixy was.

"She? Oh, she's all right. First-class girl, supports her mother, you know."

“What does she do?” persisted Loretta.

“Do, do? Why—she acts—dances, you know.”

In the whole year she had spent in New York City, Loretta had attended many a play, enjoying the stage as a child would, but her father being particular in his selection, she had as yet, never looked upon the ballet. Her shocked bewilderment may be well understood, when she saw for the first time a stage full of half clad women.

“Oh, Lawrence, let us go home. ’Tis horrible,” she cried.

Half amused, but decidedly angry, her brother, seizing her soft arm in his firm grasp, bade her in a rough whisper not to make a ninny of herself and to sit still.

Knowing it was useless to put her strength against his brute force, she yielded and trembling with disgust, waited the descent of the curtain, not before he had shown her the tallest dancer as Trixy, his best girl.

“Lawrence, it is ended?”

“Yes, wasn’t she a peach?”

“Does she expect you, Lawrence?”

“Of course, you wait here, I’ll have her out in a minute.”

Loretta was only a girl, but all the woman in her rose in revolt against this brother of hers. Getting to her feet, she put a detaining hand on his arm and said in low tones, but with so decided a ring in them that he could almost fancy his father spoke,

“Lawrence, if you go to that woman, you will not find me here when you get back.”

“The devil, listen.”

“If you don’t take me home, this minute, I’ll go by myself.” Loretta was trembling with indignation.

“I’ll do nothing of the kind. Don’t be mulish. Trixy

is all right." The crowd was fast disappearing, and the brother and sister, creating not a little conjecture on the part of those leaving, were by this time standing alone. This state of things did not escape the attention of Loretta, and added fuel to the fire of her anger. Realizing it was useless to argue with him, she left him abruptly and fled up the aisle. Forced in spite of himself to follow her, he controlled his anger until they reached their auto and then he let loose. "'Twas all the nuns, what good was an education that made a prude out of a girl, what was the harm in a bare leg, didn't God make the leg, wasn't it a piece of beauty as much as the mountain? If that was all the good convents were, it was no wonder Victor Hugo wrote as he did in *Les Misérables*. Trixy was a good girl, a damn sight better than the Harcourts that would sell their souls for money, etc.'"

Loretta listened, till an anger, hot, contemptuous, against this degenerate brother of hers, took control of her to such a degree as to frighten her. 'Twas the first time in her life that she felt contempt for another, and that other was her brother. In shocked silence she listened, fear of committing some dreadful sin, kept her lips sealed. When home was reached, rushing blindly up to her own room, she threw herself on her knees and sobbed out her anguish.

"What was the good of a convent education?" dinned in her ears, till by force of reiteration, the sentence was the suggestion of temptation. A temptation that the devil always uses against the soul, that, loving God fights obstacles in His honor, till nature, becoming tired, his satanic majesty, throws his last card, often a trump—discouragement.

"What is the use?" Prayers, Communions, early rising,

hundreds of little self denials, all for nothing! He is worse now than when I first met him, then he had respect for me, he heeded me a little—now, I am a ‘prude’.”

Far into the night, her spiritual battle raged, her spirit growing in bitterness and rebellion, till a horrible possibility, a sudden revelation, made Loretta gasp. Could it be that she, placed in the same environment, in the same temptation, might be as bad, perhaps worse, than Lawrence? Was she not his sister? Were they not of the same blood? Was it wounded pride, that caused this bitterness, or was it a just indignation that God’s honor was hurt? Folding her hands, she prayed as a simple child at its mother’s knee.

“Mary, I am your child, I am lost in darkness. Give me back the light of grace,” and with this prayer, she fell asleep, not before she had made the resolution to greet Lawrence in the morning as if nothing had happened, but no Lawrence made his appearance at the breakfast table. Whether he was ashamed, or sulky, Loretta, was not to know, although from what she heard Nurse say to Lucy about Lawrence getting out of the wrong side of the bed, Loretta might infer that her self-righteous brother was not suffering from penitence.

In the interview with Father Dusette, Loretta laid bare her terrible temptation to discouragement.

“My child,” replied the priest, “never forget in all the trials of life, in all the joys and vicissitudes that go to make up life, that you are dealing with human nature, and human nature without the grace of God, is a pretty poor article. Temptations are not sins. Thank God for temptations, child, but in all humility ask Him for the strength to conquer them.

“How do we prove the Divinity of the Catholic

Church? By the fact that, in spite of persecutions, bad Catholics, schismatics, scandals in the very sanctuary even, all proving the weakness of human nature; She, the Church, has lived, and will live, till the end of time; because human as she is; she is Divine.

“Courage, Loretta. You may not see results. That foolish brother may help to break your heart, but your prayers and self denials will not be lost. Some way, somewhere, God will answer. In the meantime, while asking God’s help, I think it might be well to make use of human aid.”

Loretta mutely questioned the priest.

“That dark, young man, that friend of Larry’s—”

“You mean Mr. Sibley, Father?” eagerly asked Loretta.

“Yes, that’s the one. Not quite fit for beatification, I understand, but dissipated, as he is, Leo Sibley has more principle than your brother and I believe that if you could appeal to Mr. Sibley to talk to Larry about the dancer,—oh, he knows child, young men don’t hide those things from each other. And now let me tell you about Kate Harcourt. I think she’ll make a fine Catholic.”

Loretta beamed. “Oh, father, how grand, but so soon?” her face clouded.

“Well, what now, child?” smiled Father Dusette.

A wild rose bloomed in Loretta’s cheek as she answered, “Why, father, it is so soon—maybe John—maybe—” with a hearty laugh he gaily cried,

“I grant you, John has a good bit to do with the sudden desire for religion.”

“Well can that do—the Church?” eagerly demanded Loretta.

“No, we don’t baptize love-smitten young ladies,” he replied with his rare smile.

A disappointed “oh.”

“But I am glad to tell you, Loretta, in Kate’s case, I can easily make an exception. Apart from her devotion to our gallant John, I believe her to be a very conscientious young woman, anxious to receive the Faith. God has made use of John as an instrument. I don’t know how her mother will act; Kate anticipates a storm in that quarter, but we will pray.”

As Kate apprehended, a storm was brewing, but did not break until some time after.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE TRUE CONVENT GIRL

Loretta, acting on Father Dusette's advice, made a Coadjutor of Mr. Sibley.

"Leave it to me, Miss Gibbons, I'll soak Larry, all right, the young rascal. That's not a hard problem." He paused,—she waited.

"If all fails, I'll read him a chapter of my wrecked life." Mr. Sibley's tone was bitter.

"Your life?" asked Loretta, with sweet sympathy.

"Only five years older than Lawrence, I'm twenty years in experience. Loretta, will you believe me," his voice shook with suppressed passion, "when I tell you though my past has not been one of which I am proud; I never wittingly led your brother astray?"

"Oh, I know, I'm sure," cried Loretta in distress, "I never dreamed you would harm him, Mr. Sibley."

"I always loved the kid, I see his faults—" he stopped, "Since I've known you and have realized what womanhood the Catholic Church can evoke, I regret I have left it."

"Oh, go back, Mr. Sibley, go back!" she cried.

"Loretta, in some things, there is no 'go back'," he choked. "A chapter from my life."

What did he mean?—he seemed anxious to tell her, and yet the telling seemed to be an agony to him. In great distress Loretta placed her hand on his arm and said,

"Mr. Siley, whatever your past was please return to the Catholic Church. I am sure you are trying to be good

now." His dark face was illuminated. His eyes filled and taking her hand, he bowed over it, saying,

"Thank you, Loretta," he hastily left the room.

'Twas long before Loretta slept that night. A simple child, a little over a year ago,—taught thoroughly her Christian Doctrine in the sacred shelter of her Convent home, the principles of the Catholic Church had unconsciously sunk deep into her pure receptive mind, till the exigencies of the moment, the perplexing needs of her life, brought these principles into activity. She, the pure, untried girl, inexperienced in sin, knew and recognized it in her brother and her brother's friend, and knew too, that God expected, because of the grace received in those sixteen years spent with the nuns, that she was to spare no effort to redeem these two men. There was absolutely no conceit in this assumption: there was revelation.

The saints need not be actors to understand the acted drama, nor are they egotists, in knowing God's commission to them to save souls.

God be blessed for the uncanonized saints, our convent girls, as the Jesuit Father classified them, "the real article."

CHAPTER XIX

MRS. HARCOURT'S DIPLOMACY

Mrs. Harcourt was too keen in her analysis of human nature not to understand that she had lost out with Mr. Gibbons, that her matrimonial scheme was by some unknown agency,—a failure. She shrewdly suspected either Lawrence or Loretta, a moment's reflection and the latter as too innocent, was dismissed. Lawrence? Yes, it might be. Wounded pride on his part. But whoever was the agent, she knew that if she intended keeping in touch with the Gibbons family, she must play another card.

With all the passion of her worldly nature, she loved her daughter Kate. Her interests, her settlement in life, was the mother's predominant passion.

Living as the Harcourts did, in the rush and expense of New York society, it was an absolute necessity that they should have an assured income. Looking over the failure of the year's intercourse with her old lover's family, Mrs. Harcourt was very sad. What was she to do?

Since Kate would not marry either father or son (of John Russell's engagement to Kate Mrs. Harcourt was strangely ignorant), some other plan must be thought of. Kate had, since the time of her debut, received the hospitality of many of their friends without any return on the part of the Harcourts. The smallness of their house being the oft repeated excuse, but that excuse could not last, so as a final resource, her last throw—Mrs. Harcourt (resolved to hire a small but select hall and give a ball as a return for the many courtesies showered on the kindly, popular Kate), of course it meant a straining to the limit

of their meagre monthly interest, but if Kate gained by it a wealthy suitor, the future so far as money went, was secure. Mrs. Harcourt had not been a leader with New York society without becoming an adroit diplomat. Knowing she had lost Mr. Gibbons as a possible suitor, why not make him a partner in her effort to further Kate's interests? No sooner thought of than done. A hurried visit to the office of her old admirer; a charming display of motherly solicitude, an humble explanation of economy practiced, and Mr. Gibbons was won.

"Why hang it, Kitty, what's the good of friends if you can't use them? I wish to the Lord, Kate and Lawrence took a fancy to each other, but since they won't,—anything on God's earth that I can do."

A slight loan—was all she would accept, would pay it back next month, if he would just for that night bring Loretta to the ball—she shrewdly felt, he would not grace the occasion without Loretta—of course she was not out—but then this was to be a private affair, just a couple of hundred,—full dress, of course, yes, she would be glad to look after Loretta's dress, the darling. Then she, Loretta could retire to private life until her formal debut; oh, no, she couldn't think of taking a large sum from Mr. Gibbons, if it ever got out, etc.

"Get out, nothing. Who's to know about it? Kitty, have sense. I have more money than I know what to do with. Of course, it will all be Loretta's and Lawrence's if the scamp behaves. I have no interest in life but them—will never marry—live for them, but that don't prevent me from helping a friend."

The end was, Mrs. Harcourt left the office a little bit humiliated, but at the same time, not a little elated in the fact that she had in her possession, a goodly check which,

for the time, would allay all uneasiness as to whether she could meet expenses or not.

Mrs. Harcourt was a woman of intense action, whatever she did was accomplished at high pressure, but always carrying on the exterior, the calm of the perfect lady, she often deceived the world at large. But not Kate. Quick to note any exhibition of weariness or nervousness on the part of her mother, Kate, under the quickened influence of her new love, saw with alarm, her mother's intense preoccupation and, on learning about the coming ball, tried to dissuade her from having it; advice was not accepted; warning of expense unheeded; arguments thrown away, and Kate gave up in despair. The services of Lawrence and Mr. Sibley were enlisted, the latter being delighted that for a short while, at least, he would have Lawrence where he could look after him; the former, in his easy good nature, pleased to be of use.

Mrs. Harcourt had a genius for keeping persons working—invitations had to be written, as it was to be such in informal affair, printed invitations would be out of place, of course the fact that such invitations were less expensive, never entered Mrs. Harcourt's mind—decorations looked after—again informality was an excuse for not hiring a draper—the supper was an important affair—no supper at a big ball of course, but this, you know, was different, and so on.

Mr. Sibley listened to the flow of exquisite language, given in her most charming manner and laughingly promised to stay at his post if he were to drop from exhaustion. Lawrence, peeved as he had been, with his former lady love, fell under her charm again, and even he, too, promised everything, even to lead the German, once obsolete, but returning to its own again.

Of course the two gentlemen heard Mrs. Harcourt's eulogies about themselves. Mrs. Harcourt intended that they should, she was talking to Kate.

"She's a crackerjack, Sib. Imagine the coolness of her making use of a rejected suitor—sure thing, I know I was a jackass to ask her—but I did. Gave me the mitten and here I am. What the—? Now, look here Leo, if you expect me to work with you, keep clear of Trixy. It's none of your damn business, I'll marry whom I please. What did you say? Father? Unless you tell him, he knows nothing about it."

Kate joined them at this juncture and the dangerous topic was dropped, but at the first opportunity that presented itself, Lawrence went off to pleasanter quarters. During the weeks preceeding the ball, although he remained faithful to his promise to drill for the German, he took particular care not to be alone with Mr. Sibley.

Loretta, pleased as any girl would be, by the anticipation of her first big ball, two hundred persons seemed large to Loretta, was especially pleased, as this ball was not to be a launching into the swim of social life; but one anxiety held her mind. Lawrence and Trixy. She grew more anxious as Mr. Sibley in his short reports to her had nothing encouraging to tell. Lawrence was ugly, would not be handled, but sympathizing deeply with her sisterly solicitude, Mr. Sibley tried to cheer her.

Plan and work as hard as she might, Mrs. Harcourt could not succeed in having the ball at the time she desired it, for the very simple reason an autocrat barred her way and that high personage was Lady Gordon, the official authority on all things that pertained to dress.

To attend an affair given by any leaders of New York society and not wear the stamp of Lucille on the attire

was in itself enough to brand the costume as not fashionable. But just as Mrs. Harcourt needed her, the artistic fashioner of style declared emphatically she could not and would not, handle any dresses till a month had passed. Mrs. Harcourt with a sigh, compromised for the length of time that must elapse before she could, with one grand effort, cancel Kate's social obligations—by giving a candy pull party to a small but select crowd of eligibles, warning the invited guests that in order to keep in the spirit of the candy pull, the candy making and supper should take place in the kitchen presided over by their cook Mollie Donaghue.

Kate's love for her mother, though indulgent, was not blind and the girl understood that candy pull and ball were but a means towards her settlement in life. Knowing that there was no one on earth who could fill John Russell's place in her affections, in anticipation Kate grieved over the disappointment that was surely to be her mother's portion, when she learned of her daughter's engagement. Kate might, indeed, have put an end to much trouble and expense by telling her mother the truth but with the hope that often comes to the hard-pressed, the former hoped that in putting off the inevitable something unexpected might happen. Then, too, she knowing that the excitement of preparation though wearing on her mother's nerves, was a stimulant, an intellectual bracer, let the preparations go on.

Mrs. Harcourt loved action; inaction to her meant stupidity, so said Kate when talking over the coming events of candy pull and party with the most sympathetic friend a girl ever had, Loretta, she, the former explained the lay of the land and begged prayers, earnest prayers for her mother.

Lawrence continued to be a great source of anxiety to Loretta seldom home in the evening, the natural conclusion drawn by her was that he was getting more entangled with the dancer.

“More things are wrought by prayer than this world knows of.”

Many an apparently hopeless spiritual case is saved by the Communion of Saints. The chain of prayer—this Communion, is one of God’s mercies to erring man.

To Lawrence, if you had asked him, ’twas a case of disillusion, but who dares to say the disillusion was not a work of prayer?

Dozens of times had the heedless Lawrence looked on his beautiful but vulgar Trixy and saw nothing to disillusion him, countless hours he had watched her smoking cigarettes, aye and kissed her full lips slightly tinged with the die of tobacco, and, yet, was not shocked. But one evening at a late supper at Shanley’s, together with girls of her class, not bad but vulgar, shrewd and worldly, the psychological moment came (why not the hour of Communion of Saints) and Lawrence, standing up told her in the presence of her friends; that it was a draw, he was tired of this kind of living, and he was going to quit. Loud laughter first greeted him, then stinging sarcasm; but listening to it all, with a quiet dignity, he bade them good night, as he said, for “keeps,” and “keeps” it was.

Loretta wondered one evening when the Gibbons’ home saw the absentee at dinner, wondered still more, when asking her permission to smoke, he sat down on a lounge and commanded her to play for him. Delighted beyond expression, Loretta flew to the piano, played and sang until her brother, getting into the spirit of the thing joined in the singing.

It was on this domestic scene Mr. Sibley walked, with a "Well I'll be hanged—"

"Oh no you won't, Leo, you wouldn't be so foolish," grinned Lawrence. "Sit down and make yourself happy." And happy they were, and when an hour after Kate and John Russell, with Mr. Gibbons, joined them, a happier crowd would be hard to find.

At the close of the evening, Mr. Gibbons, having to attend to business, had left them early, Lawrence escorted Kate and John to the hall door; leaving, for one brief moment, Mr. Sibley alone with Loretta.

"Mr. Sibley," delightedly asked Loretta, her beautiful face aglow, "what does it mean? Has our blessed Mother heard?"

"I don't understand it Loretta. He may be tired and just stayed in for this evening."

"Oh no, before you came he made me understand he was going to learn duets with me. That looks—" her eyes questioned his.

"Why, yes, that looks good to me," he smiled a very tender smile and then grew deathly pale.

"Oh my dear friend, what is it?" she earnestly asked.

"Nothing Loretta, just a passing pain."

"Oh, you should be careful, perhaps you are working too hard," her manner was kind and eager. He turned abruptly, bade her goodnight almost rudely and going out staggered.

"Hello Leo! old boy. What's up? Good heaven man! What ails you?" cried Lawrence.

"Nothing," said Mr. Sibley and lunged into the darkness.

"Lawrence," eagerly asked Loretta, "is he sick?" Giving her a keen look of appraisal not unlike his father's

and satisfied that his sister was innocent of the real reason of Leo Sibley's sickness, Lawrence said with more feeling than it was customary for him to show,

"Poor Leo! Poor old boy."

For three or four evenings, preceding the candy pull, Lawrence spent them, to the delight of Loretta, at home, with herself and her father. So quiet, so changed was he, that Mr. Gibbons took occasion, while Loretta and he were having their early breakfast alone, to ask her what she thought was the matter with Lawrence.

"Nothing, papa,—only the effect of prayer." He looked puzzled.

"You mean he is praying?"

"No, dear, when he begins, then we may stop."

"We? I don't understand."

"Father," said she, with intense eagerness, "you believe in the Bible?" He nodded. "Well, that Holy Book tells 'when two or three are gathered together in MY Name, I am in their midst,' and Father Dusette, his teacher you know, Nurse, Sister Ambrose, Kate and myself, are all praying for Lawrence."

"Kate, you say? Why she's no Catholic; what has she got to do with it," asked he in very evident interest. Loretta in her eagerness had almost betrayed Kate's secret, it embarrassed her, all the more as Mr. Gibbons seemed studying her.

"Why—why—you don't have to be a Catholic to pray, you know."

"Oh, you don't? I was thinking you Catholics had a monopoly on the article, kind of trust, you know. Where the big guns, the monopolists, like the priests and sisters got the biggest part of the dough and the—"

"Father, don't."

“Don’t what?”

“Make fun of prayer,” she begged earnestly.

“Lord bless you child, I wasn’t thinking of such a thing. I was just poking fun at you. But you said when Lawrence began to pray, the crowd would stop—what do you mean by that?”

“Simply this, dear, others can form together to make as it were, a chain of prayer, the friends on earth, the saints in Heaven and the souls in Purgatory.” In answer to a look of inquiry, “Purgatory is a place of fire where, after death, those stained by faults are washed clean—and this chain of prayer is the Communion of Saints.”

“Humph, very pretty idea, that chain,” deep thought, “but say, washed from faults, by George, it looks like a tough proposition for us unwashed fellows. Well when Lawrence goes it alone, the rest of you leave him?”

She laughed, and running to him caught his big head in her arms and tumbled his hair, very much to his satisfaction. Then stooping, close to his ear, she whispered,

“When one begins to pray for one’s self, he is on the right road, and don’t need so much help.”

She kissed him and left him to his thoughts. Long he thought and when at length the problem became too deep for him to solve, he picked up “Paradise Lost,” which Lawrence had left on a side table, and read where Adam entertained an angel unawares. “Hanged if I don’t think I am entertaining an angel. Did the teaching of the nuns make her what she is? Certainly she didn’t get religion from me. Her mother was a sister’s girl too. I believe she would give her eyes if I got religion. Wished I had.”

And Lawrence? Something was working in him. Spoiled, petted, made selfish and thoughtless by education and environment, he had more than the ordinary

young man's share of conceit and self righteousness. His sudden break with Trixy on his disillusionment filled him with disgust with himself; he had been making a fool of himself with a woman coarse and vulgar, others must often have seen her, as he did the night of the break. Was he vulgar too? "Ah gee, there is something rotten." And it was during this revulsion of spirit he gladdened Loretta's heart; though had she understood, that his apparent conversion was disgust of himself, she might not have been so jubilant.

She longed to tell Mr. Sibley the good news; and wondered why he did not come to see them. Not a night passed that Leo Sibley did not keep tryst outside the house. Standing in its shadow on the opposite side of the street—he watched her as she moved round the brilliantly lighted parlor or sat in thought facing the uncurtained window. Could she have seen him, his fine eyes full of the fire of the purest passion that can dominate a man, the pure love for a pure woman; could she have seen those same lovelit eyes dimmed with tears of sorrow, could she have noted the anguish of his face;—childlike, as was her character, she would have been woman enough to have realized fully that Leo Sibley loved her with a strong despairing love. But happily for her peace of mind, she did not see him, and did not know.

CHAPTER XX

THE CANDY PULL

In the small but dainty kitchen of the Harcourt house a very select crowd of eligible bachelors, with a sprinkling of young girls, was learning from a grave young woman, Molly Donaghue, Mrs. Harcourt's wonderful cook and general housekeeper (the latter fact was not generally known), the intricacies of candy making.

Molly, besides being an adept at the art of cooking, was a dignified teacher. Her quiet assumption of knowledge, her practical way of her presentation of her subject, impressed her heedless crowd of students and stimulated an ardent desire to achieve individual perfection in the culinary art.

"Mr. Gibbons, don't chop that way. Hold the beater so," adjusting the egg-beater, in his beautiful, but at that employment, awkward hands. "Miss Brown, not one drop of yolk must mix with the white. Miss Kate, please don't put that thermometer in that ice cold water, right out of that intense heat. Have more sense. Mrs. Harcourt, Mr. Gray is chopping nut shells in with the kernels. Please roll those stuffed dates lightly, Miss Loughton, in that powdered sugar; see, you have pressed them out of shape. Mr. Wilkins if you don't stop eating those brandied cherries, we won't have enough for the candy. Take this dish outside, Mr. Dixon and Miss Mary, and pull it; it's too hot in here," and so quickly speeding from one to the other, Molly with dignified decision made order exist in chaos. All anxious to do right, spoke little, until Lawrence, wearying of his task held the egg-beater aloft and

asked, "Say, where the dickens is Sibley? Didn't you invite him Mrs. Harcourt?"

"Invite Mr. Sibley; you do not suppose Lawrence, I would forget so charming a gentleman?"

"Why isn't he here then? What's that Molly? Great Scott, I forgot the suds." Whack went the beater.

"Mr. Gibbons, you'll make those whites rough. Do it this way. 'Deed I wish Mr. Sibley were here. He'd learn quicker than you," said Molly out of patience with the erratic Lawrence.

"He would, would he?" in a tone of pique, "you seem to think a heap of Mr. Sibley, Molly."

"I do. He's a gentleman if ever there was one," quietly answered Molly energetically beating some fudge. "Here, Mr. Gibbons, let those whites drop in slowly—slowly—Good gracious! Don't you know what slow is?" Molly was slightly exasperated.

"Molly," corrected Mrs. Harcourt in a cold tone.

"She's all right," laughed Lawrence, interested for once in his life in a really natural woman. Molly, without being pretty had a complexion of health, and except when her naturally quick temper dominated her, the poise and dignity of virtue. The fact that Molly, the cook, paid him, the rich man's son, no more deference than she did the other young men, seemed not to be bothering herself about him at all, had its own attraction for Lawrence. Anxious to make her talk, for Molly then showed teeth and dimples, Lawrence asked her why she thought Mr. Sibley such a gentleman.

"Wait, Mr. Gibbons, till I see how they are pulling that candy," running out as she spoke, but soon reappearing with some apples which she gave to a couple of gentle-

men with the directions to peel them thin, she rejoined Lawrence saying,

“Mr. Sibley is a gentleman; because he forgets himself in thinking about others.”

“Oh! he does, does he? Illustrate.”

“Illustrate?” echoed Molly.

“Yes, show me, give me an example of his thought for others. Stir this did you say? Ouch! that burnt a hole in my hand.”

Molly laughed, as she quietly answered with a twinkle of humor in her honest eyes, “I have seen Mr. Sibley bow to a poor, ragged girl; and I saw him help a wash woman carry her basket across the street.”

“Help a washerwoman with her basket? Humph. Allow me, Molly.” Lawrence jumped to her side and caught with her the pot handle of a pot of candy and adroitly placed it in the sink, while Molly with her humorous smile thanking him, passed to another group.

“Loretta,” whispered Kate, they were sorting nuts at a small table by themselves, “did you see what Lawrence did?”

“No.”

“I hope to goodness he will let our cook alone. He was helping her with that big pot.”

“Why, what of that, Kate?” asked Loretta.

“Oh, nothing—but you know he is as handsome as a young god. He has no business talking to a poor girl, putting notions in her head.”

“Who is she, Kate? She seems a nice girl.”

“She is a nice girl; worth her weight in gold; she’s about twenty-three I believe, for we’ve had her over three years and she was then some time from school. You know she graduated from the eighth grade in the Parochial

School; Sisters of Charity, I believe the teachers are. Oh, they know how to teach. Cooking? No, she took a course in that. She does not have to work now. Her father and brothers are plumbers. Men of that trade are New York's future millionaires."

"Why is she working?" asked Loretta with interest.

"That's just what we are in daily dread of—her leaving us. When she came to us on the Sisters' recommendation, her father had been sick a year and was unable to work; so she thought she should help; now the father and boys are making money, they want her home. Time for supper Molly? Very well—everybody listen. We are going to have supper here. The gentlemen will sit around the wall and watch the ladies set the table. No, boys, keep your aprons on: because after supper you are going to wash the dishes. Lawrence, behave. Go sit down over there. No, Molly does not need you; you are in her way."

All present voted the supper delicious and the setting unique; and when Lawrence enthusiastically declared he could live and die in a kitchen, there was a general laugh; at the hush of which, Mrs. Harcourt, beaming with the thought of coming triumph, rose and reminded all present that her private ball was not to be forgotten.

"Mrs. Harcourt, this evening has been far more comfy than a big formal ball. I vote the ball be knocked off the list; and another grand candy pull be put in its place," gaily cried a husky young multi-millionaire.

Mrs. Harcourt beamed graciously at him, when Kate enthusiastically endorsing his suggestion, cried,

"Oh ma, let's forget that ball," her mother's face

clouded. "The invitations are all written", said Mrs. Harcourt decidedly.

"Throw them in the waste basket, Sib and I will write some more," gaily announced Lawrence.

"No ball, no ball," echoed all, going as the modern crowd usually does, towards anything new.

Mrs. Harcourt was evidently displeased.

"My friends there is no reason for canceling the date of the hall. 'Tis hired and then too, there is no reason why we should not have a second candy pull."

"Mrs. Harcourt, if Molly could come over and superintend another at our house, I am sure father would be delighted to have you all; say, next week." The speaker was Loretta, Lawrence grinned his appreciation. His sister believed this second candy pull would be an added home attraction and so suggested it. Kate looked her surprise. Mrs. Harcourt by strength of will had conquered all appearance of displeasure, and answered genially,

"Loretta, I should be delighted to lend Molly as I know she will enjoy going, but not, dear heart, till after the ball." And so it was settled.

CHAPTER XXI

A SOUL'S STRUGGLE

Two men were seated in Father Dusette's narrow room. Father Dusette's face wore his most spiritual expression, his whole being seemed to radiate paternal love, while poor Leo Sibley's intense anguish illustrated the soul in conflict.

They sat long in silence, till Father Dusette, who seemed to wait for something said gently,

"Well, Leo, well my son,—"

"Father,—apart from that short period—of gambling, which I went into to save my mother's life,—you know she died nearly two years ago," the priest nodded. Mr. Sibley seemed to choke, but with an effort went on, "Even in that, I never fleeced a poor man. I never even cheated, Father."

"I know, my son. Go on."

"I loved pleasure, and had it; but Father, I was never dishonorable in my dealings with man or woman—"

"Yes?" a long pause, then a burst of passion from Mr. Sibley.

"With God, no—I was not fair to Him,—I did no deliberate evil."

"Leo," Father Dusette's voice was low, but the insistent ring in it startled the young man and he moved restlessly.

"I ceased to be a Catholic."

"And that was no evil, Leo!"

"'Twas better than being half a Catholic, Father," insisted the other.

“If that were true then, why is it not true now?” asked the priest. The two looked each other through. Mr. Sibley laughed nervously.

“Environments change conditions, Father.”

“Leo, be true—come across, my son, come across.”

“She told me to come back.” Mr. Sibley’s voice was low and passionate.

“Coming back means what, my son? A half Catholic or a whole Catholic?”

Mr. Sibley’s eyes burned black; his hands gripped the chair, his tongue wet his fevered lips as he answered hoarsely,

“My God! a whole one, Father.”

Springing from his chair, Father Dusette, throwing his arm around the other’s shoulder, strained him to him and joyously said,

“Thank God, my son, thank God. Now kneel down and make your peace with God. Wait till I get my stole. There, that’s right, lad, right here at my knee, courage.”

The long confession, interrupted by many a dry sob, was ended and Mr. Sibley’s face wore a spiritual beauty unknown to it for years.

“Now remember, my son, never again.”

“Just once, Father, just once,” he pleaded. “The ball.”

“There is danger there, Leo—”

“You do not trust me, father?” his manner was pathetic. Father Dusette, a most severe ascetic towards himself—was the tenderest of man in his dealings with sinners. Catching the other’s hand, he answered warmly,

“Trust you, my son? In dealing with Loretta you have been a Bayard in honor. ’Twas yourself I wished to spare. Once again will be added torture.”

Mr. Sibley radiated joy as he enthusiastically cried, "Torture? Aye the rack, but I'd gladly go through it, to gaze on her beautiful face once more. See as a future pledge, I leave you this. I stole that from Lawrence. Give it back to him, Father. Good night."

And Father Dusette was left alone with Loretta's angelic face smiling at him from the photograph in his hand. Long the priest looked at the beautiful face, then putting the picture carefully in a drawer, threw himself on his knees before Our Lord in the Garden and prayed.

"Oh Christ, my Lord, I thank you for that product of Convent teaching, that convent girl. She has brought back to you a sinner, a sinner—but a man, a martyr. God, my God, give him strength, flood his poor heart, broken with sorrow, with the consolations of your grace."

That night as Leo Sibley knelt beside his bed, in prayer, he wondered where his happiness, his exaltation of spirit came from. He had not deserved it, he knew, but with deep humility he thanked God for the gift of consolation which poured into his soul.

CHAPTER XXII
LAWRENCE LEARNS THE ART OF
BEING A GENTLEMAN

In the few weeks that intervened between the candy pull and the ball many a household was busy—busy with the momentous question of dress for Mrs. Harcourt's so-called private ball, the feature of the season; but a certain young man without being troubled on the question of his attire was the busiest of the invited list. Lawrence Gibbons, a couple days following the Harcourt's kitchen party, was strolling home from a dance in the early morning. Having danced all night till he had brought on a nervous headache, he wisely concluded a cold walk might better things, as it would give him time for what he rarely had—an interval of retrospection.

“Well! I have been a consummate fool dancing till I have not a leg to stand on. Gee, what is the use of it anyway. Can't a fellow have have a good time in moderation. Why the dickens didn't I stop at a decent hour? Why? Because they would not let me, the girls. What kind of girls were they—young girls, bony and skinny, and showing their bones, too; young girls round and plump—they did not go behind the door either to hide their charms—and fat old women, ugh! so ugly, all dolled up, good dancers though, gee! Mrs. Dickinson dances better than her daughters—if she wouldn't paint—but didn't they all paint?”

A vision of Loretta's fresh beauty flashed before him, he shook his head. “No Lorettas there last night, not by a long shot. What's the matter with the women anyhow?

Oh, I beg your pardon." This apology was confusedly offered to a young woman carrying a big basket of vegetables, into whom he had unseeingly ran. He stooped to pick up lettuce and onions, while she tartly asked him if he were blind.

"No, I don't think I am, though nearly blind from want of sleep. Say, what the—Why it is Molly," cried Lawrence, suddenly waking up to the fact that a very much alive and daintily, neat, young woman was regarding him with manifest disfavor.

"What's left of me Mr. Gibbons. Why don't you look where you are going?" Lawrence chuckled. No woman with exception of nurse Nellie ever addressed him in such brusque tones.

"Well to tell the honest truth, Mollie, I didn't see where I was going. Here, give it here! Yes, I am going to carry it. Shucks! I guess I have as much right to carry a vegetable basket as Sibley has to carry an old woman's laundry basket. No, I am going to carry this and that is the end of it." A very dignified, displeased young woman walked beside him. Again Lawrence chuckled almost audibly. A little bit of temper improved Mollie's looks. They walked a block in silence, then she stopped and said in a most decided tone,

"Give it to me please Mr. Gibbons." Her persistency made him impatient.

"Look here, Mollie, I'm trying to be a gentleman, you won't let me." The faintest glimmer of a smile emboldened him to ask,

"Now, if Sibley were to carry this you would let him, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," she answered promptly.

“Well, look at that will you. What’s the difference?”

“A good bit Mr. Gibbons. Mr. Sibley does those things without thinking while you—”

“Yes, while I,—go on.”

“Do it just because of the mood you are in.” He was startled. Her shrewdness seemed uncanny. Laughing boyishly, he said,

“Say, look here, Mollie, if a fellow, no matter what his mood is, tries to do the decent thing, let him do it. Gee! this is heavy. Why do you carry it, why don’t you have it delivered?”

Understanding the boy in Lawrence, she quietly answered,

“Because I know if I carry home the vegetables I pick out I will be more sure of getting them.”

“Oh,” he looked down at her in admiration, noting how erect she carried herself, how devoid of all self consciousness—how clear her complexion; and unwittingly he compared her personality with the shallow girls with whom he had danced the night away.

They walked in silence, then Lawrence ventured again,

“Do you have to work, Mollie?”

“Mr. Gibbons, we will not discuss my affairs, if you please.”

“Gee! she’s a regular tartar.” He saw neither the tremble of the mouth nor the sparkle in her eye, but after that snub he did not try again to engage her in conversation. The Harcourt’s house being reached he handed her the basket with a dignified bow to which she responded with an icy “Thank you.” Could he have seen her a

moment after, doubled up with laughter he might indeed have been indignant.

Kate coming suddenly into the kitchen stood in silent surprise. "What in the world is the matter with you Mollie, what are you laughing at."

"Nothing, Miss Kate, just thinking, but what brings you down so early?"

"Oh Mollie, get some hot coffee ready as soon as you can, make it black, ma has had such an attack! I wish that old ball was in Halifax! I am sure she will be sick before it is over."

"Dear me, dear me," cried Mollie in quick sympathy, "we must keep her in bed today."

"Easier said than done, Mollie; you will bring it up when it is ready?" For economic reasons the Harcourt's help consisted of Mollie, with two extra maids coming for a couple of hours in the morning and after meals, so as to impress the outside world.

To Kate, anxiously studying the doctrine of a church in which she fully believed, every moment was precious. This short, but not slight sickness of her mother, the preparation for the ball; the dread of her mother's awakening, when she learned of John Russell's relations toward her daughter; all combined to make Kate a very apprehensive young woman. When somewhat later in the day Mollie called her out of the darkened sick room to meet John Russell, Kate was truly relieved.

"Oh, John, how glad I am to see you, sit down and tell me why you came now."

"No, Kate, no sitting for me, Teddie is taking a party down to Panama and the Boss deputed me with another chap to go down with him and write up proceedings. 'Tis a big scoop, but it means absence from you, I won't be

here for the ball, but it is a big thing! Things are coming my way, it means a few more dollars towards the little home." He fondly looked at her; and Kate, the brave of heart, gave him what he was looking for, enthusiastic appreciation.

"Of course, things are coming your way, you dear! Why John it is miraculous, even my conversion."

John laughed, "Almost too much so, Kate. Remember I want you a regular dyed-in-the-wool Catholic. No half measures for me. Study hard, my girl—because in these pagan days a Catholic has to fight. Why, bless you 'tis a wonder I have a whole bone in my skin, you ought to hear the arguments I have to put up daily—and my wife—" he stopped, and looked so fondly at Kate that she hid her head on his shoulder. A swift change of expression; and Kate looked up to see a man gazing at her with tender, humble reverence, he finished, "she won't have to fight because she will convince without fighting. Well, good-bye, Kate, pray hard till I come back." She kept up till the door closed on him, then throwing herself on a lounge and burying her head in the pillows, Kate sobbed heart brokenly. "How would it end." In this paroxysm of grief Mollie, the sympathetic, found her.

"Miss Kate, darling, what is it, was that your young man?"

"Yes, Mollie, that is my young man."

"Dear me, I am so glad, he is a fine one."

"Yes, Mollie, he is a man in a thousand, but he is a poor man, and—"

"A Catholic," suggested Mollie.

"Yes, a Catholic. I am studying."

Mollie clasped her hands delightedly.

"Thanks be to God, never a day passes but I pray for

you and your mother's conversion." Kate was deeply touched. What a wonderful Church she was going to join, what a grand democracy, servant and mistress united in one bond of prayer. She kissed Mollie who glowed with delight.

"And your young man, Mollie." Mollie's laugh was care free. "I have no man, except my father and brothers, but Miss Kate, if I ever do get one, you may be sure, he will be a Catholic."

CHAPTER XXIII

WHERE IS MR. SIBLEY?

Not knowing positively that Lawrence had broken with Trixy, whenever he was absent of an evening, Loretta was filled with apprehension; then too, Mr. Sibley, on whom she depended for information, had for some unaccountable reason absented himself from the Gibbons home. Determined to find out if possible from her father, what was the matter with Mr. Sibley, Loretta was not a little surprised one evening after her father's greeting, to hear him ask, "Larry home? He isn't? Pshaw. Perhaps, you know, Loretta, where Mr. Sibley keeps himself."

"Mr. Sibley, father?"

"Yes, I have need of someone on whom I can rely, I want a man to go across to Paris on some important business and I can't get it out of my head but that Leo Sibley is the man. You don't know where he puts up? Well, well."

"Why not send Lawrence, father?"

"Who, Larry? That scatter brain? Why he would spill the beans. Oh, no, that is out of the question. I want a man that holds his trap. I wish I could find him. I guess I will have to go out again, girlie. I will put a detective on him. What's that? hurt his feelings, hurt nothing! There is money in it. That is the reason I want him. Loretta, the more I see of that chap the more I like him. There is stuff there." He kissed her and then as if struck by her wild rose beauty, held her off from him.

“Say, child, if you ever lose that; you will never make use of an artificial one.”

Loretta was horrified. “You mean paint, father, why I would not think of such a thing! A child of Mary, wouldn’t stoop to do such a deceitful act.”

He grinned. “Who taught you that, the nuns? Well that is one to their credit.”

“Only one, father?”

“Oh, ONE added to the rest,” he laughed, “Loretta, I believe sometimes when I see our American women, young and old, fixed up like so many vaudeville actresses, I could run to some desert island; if it was not I have a dear little natural woman waiting for me at home. A man gets disgusted; if it isn’t paint, it is powder so thick you could scrape it off or it is a display of bony anatomy or two legs in one trouser leg. I, I—” but Loretta laughed, clapped a plump little hand over his mouth and merrily choked him off.

“Now be good, papa, if you don’t like the women don’t look at them.”

“Look at them,” he good naturedly growled, “why I have all I can do from falling over them, they are everywhere—everywhere—but at home. Lord, I don’t wonder the men get divorces. Why! if I had such women in my households I’d, I’d—choke them. Good-bye,” he laughed.

Lawrence coming in shortly after, Loretta put the momentous question of Mr. Sibley’s whereabouts to him.

“Seen Sib. You bet I did, I saw too much of his confounded cheek, damn him!”

“Oh, Larry, don’t talk that way about him.”

“Say, you seem mighty interested in him. Great Scott—” a sudden suspicion becoming apparent, “Lo-

retta, you have not been putting Leo on my track?" Lawrence in anger looked ugly. Loretta trembled.

"Why do you ask such a question, Larry?"

"Because he has been trying to pump me about Trixy; and when I got infernally mad, and told him to mind his own business, he sweetly said that it was his business to see that I didn't torment you. Cheeky, wasn't it? Well, I sent him where he belonged and told him I did not care a hang about Trixy or any of her high kickers. What's the ecstasy for? that's just the way that long legged Sib acted. Look here! I wish you two would realize I'm old enough to take care of myself." And with that parting benediction Larry sped up two steps at a time to his room. Once there he sat in deep thought wrinkling his handsome forehead, struggling with some weighty problem till satisfied he had found the solution he tore down to the parlor where he found his sister sitting in pensive thought, and greeting her as if nothing had happened to mar their harmony, he asked,

"Loretta, there was a book in mother's little bookcase, it's gone now." (The rogue had seen Loretta handing it to Kate a short time back.) "It was 'The Mother's Belief,' I think, Loretta."

"The Mother's Belief, you say Larry? I never saw such a book; was it a pious one?"

"Yes, it was among her prayer books. I believe it was 'The Mother's Faith'."

"You don't mean 'Faith of Our Fathers', Lawrence? Yes? oh, I gave that to Kate." Loretta stopped confusedly as she realized Kate's study of the Catholic religion was a secret—Lawrence too deeply interested in his own scheme did not notice his sister's slip.

“So she has it, has she? Oh, well I will just drop down there tomorrow and take a look at it.”

“Oh, Lawrence,” beamed Loretta, “you are going to look up the doctrine of your Church, how grand!” He had the grace to grin shame facedly and then chuckling at the success of his plan went again to his room. He was a strange compound, this heedless son of wealth. Wildly gay as the mood swayed him, there were times when nothing, but the reading of a fine classic satisfied him; and this was one of the moments of literary cravings. He pulled book after book out of his case till his hand rested on Sheehan’s “Under the Stars and Cedars.” “Strange,” he muttered, I never saw that before, I bet she put it there, well! if it is pious I will chuck it in the waste basket.”

Lighting a cigar, putting his feet on the mantle and tilting his chair to the proper angle, he read. Morning surprised him at his occupation, and then letting his chair down with a bang, throwing the alluring book on the bed, stretching his arms in a mighty yawn, he said to himself, “Some writer, that Sheehan, makes a fellow ashamed of his lazy life,” and tumbled into bed while his sister slept the sleep of a grateful devotee after thanking God that her beloved brother was going to study the Faith of our Fathers.

And where was Mr. Sibley? He was standing in the early morning in a rich apartment facing a wild-eyed woman in costly dishabille.

“You sent for me, Mildred?” His voice and manner were cold.

“Yes, Leo, I sent for you, I am wild with despair. Bobby is dying. Of what good is wealth to me now?”

"You bought it, that was your bargain," he answered gently but coldly.

"My God, Leo, don't you understand, don't you hear? Bobby, my beautiful one, is dying."

"I hear and understand, Mildred, but what can I do?"

"What can you do?" she asked passionately; the wreck of a once beautiful woman, still young, but with lines on her face that were hard and worldly. "What can you not do, Leo Sibley? Come," she grasped his arm with frenzied strength and half pulled him across the room into an adjoining one. "See," her tone was intensely scornful as she pointed to a large and heavy-set man lying face downward on the rich rug—the very laxness of the outlines of the big body told plainly the story of animal intoxication. "See, you can take me from this, from that brute." She had gone so close to the body that the edge of her elegant kimona touched it; and with intense loathing she plucked away the garment. The motion and scorn were not lost on Mr. Sibley. His face grew stern and his voice rang with something, she knew not what.

"Mildred, stop right here; you are as responsible for THAT, as he is. He was not that way, when you married him. God when your death comes will not only judge your soul; but add to your burden, his evil life, in so far as you have been criminal in making it such."

She shrank from him. He continued.

"I would not raise a finger to take you from him—but I would beg you to repent." She regained her scornful attitude.

"Repent with him. No sir." Mr. Sibley seemed startled by some inward thought, he turned to leave her when a maid rushing into the room called.

“Come quickly, he is going.” With a cry of a wounded animal the woman rushed after the maid into a smaller apartment where on a little cot in the last struggle for life lay a small boy. The mother frantically picked up the child and crushed it to her heart. “No, I won’t give him up. He has never committed sin. Oh, God you have no right to take him. Ella, get the doctors, do something.” The girl sadly shook her head while the mother distraught with agony paced up and down clutching the boy tight to her. A horrible possibility made Leo Sibley step quickly to her side and with strong but gentle hands unclasped her rigid grip. One glance was enough—a piercing scream, and the heart-broken mother fell heavily to the floor. Placing her with the maid’s help on a lounge nearby, and the dead child in his cot, giving the girl his boarding house address, Leo Sibley with drawn lines of sorrow on his face left the room.

CHAPTER XXIV

LAWRENCE GROWS IN DIPLOMACY

The next morning as trim Mollie Donaghue struggled under a big basket of garden stuff she heard someone back of her coming on a run, heard the panting breath, and the aspirated "Mollie" and turning saw Lawrence at his best; tumbled curls, glowing cheeks, brilliant eyes, and flashing teeth; for an instant, the quiet girl was taken off her guard; 'twas seldom she looked at such perfection of form and feature. Delighted at her unconscious interest Lawrence pulled off his hat in a sweeping bow and stuttered off a seemingly important message. "My sister, Mollie, wants me to get a book from Miss Harcourt, she lent it to her you know." After the first suddenness of surprise Mollie was herself again, cold, shrewd, and unsympathetic.

"It is mighty early in the morning she is sending for a book." For a brief second the rogue was non-plussed; but quickly recovering his wits he explained,

"Not early for my sister, you know, she goes to St. Ignatius' for early Mass. I'm to meet her with the book."

Mollie tried to read him; but the handsome face was inscrutable. The story seemed plausible, so she reluctantly allowed him to take the basket and walk home with her. To her astonishment, the bold fellow did not stop at the door, but following in her wake, entered the kitchen and seated himself uninvited. Mollie, at first inclined to be angry, allowed her sense of humor, a strong one, to get the better of her discretion and laughed aloud. Lawrence delightedly joined in. When both had finished, Mollie

asked seriously, "You don't think Miss Harcourt is up this time in the morning, do you?"

"Oh, no," answered Lawrence easily, "I know she isn't, but perhaps you could look where she keeps her books. I saw some in her sitting room."

Angered by his cool assumption, Mollie as coolly informed him she had to make the coffee and get breakfast ready. Not being at all anxious to meet Kate, fearing her keen glance of scrutiny, Lawrence rose quickly, told her with dignity, having no desire to inconvenience her, he would come again. "Bother take him," thought Mollie, "what ails the fellow. Please watch that kettle that it don't boil over and I will go up and see. What's the name? 'Faith of Our Fathers'?"

Left alone Lawrence chuckled delightedly, and having often watched Nurse make the coffee at the breakfast table in the percolator he, as soon as the kettle boiled, which was at the psychological moment of Mollie's departure, finding the ground coffee at hand, poured the boiling water on it and then set close to it to watch the result. Mollie coming down stairs attracted by the delicious aroma of made coffee flew into the kitchen. "The kettle boiled, Mollie, and I thought I had better make the coffee," grinned Lawrence. A desperate effort at stern dignity and Mollie again succumbed.

Lawrence grinned delightedly.

"I suppose," she laughingly said, "you'll want a cup of coffee next?"

"Exactly what I want, Mollie. How did you think of it?" The cup of coffee naturally suggested one of Mollie's delicious rolls. While slowly disposing of his frugal breakfast Lawrence, in an easy manner asked,

“Mollie, do you happen to know our name, Gibbons, is Irish?”

“Irish? Of course it is, as Irish as Donaghue; that is if Donaghue is spelled with a ‘g’,” explained Mollie,

“Spelled with ‘G’?” innocently echoed Lawrence. “Why I thought it was spelled with a ‘D’.”

“For a smart man you are slightly obtuse,” acidly remarked Mollie.

Having accomplished more than he had planned on, Lawrence rose and bowed himself out of the kitchen. Without exactly understanding her own mind on the subject, the girl did not tell Kate about her morning visitor.

CHAPTER XXV
WHEN YOU DAILY MEET CHRIST
YOU MEET A CROSS

In Father Dusette's little room strong passions were at work, passions that mar or make, passions that frustrate or further, passions that damn or sanctify. The fight eternal; the material with the immaterial; the finite with the infinite; and the battlefield, in this instance, was Leo Sibley's soul, and the combatants, it goes without saying, were himself and Father Dusette.

"Leo I tell you you cannot dispose of that as carelessly as you think. You cannot throw off responsibility as easily as you do your clothes."

"Father, Mildred Brown is not a responsibility of mine. She has her husband."

"Leo, did she not send for you?"

"She did."

"Did she not ask you to take her from that drunken sot?"

"She did. But Good God! Father, what have I got to do with her. She married for money—she paid the price." His face was working with agony.

"She sent for you, she appealed to you and events that come to us like that cannot be thrown aside—they are responsibilities and must be shouldered as such."

"In heaven's name, what do you want me to do—haven't I enough sorrow today without saddling myself with Mildred Brown. What can I do for her?"

"Go to her, help her with the funeral and afterwards

suggest to her to leave her life of sin and go into the Good Shepherd.”

Leo Sibley blankly stared at the priest and then laughed a harsh, loud lough. “Life of sin! She’s all right in the eyes of the world. Do you want her husband to kill me! And the Good Shepherd! Good God, Father, you haven’t the remotest idea of what kind of a woman Mildred is. Good Shepherd! Good heavens, you think she would go? I know she wouldn’t. She is not worth thinking about.”

“Leo you thought enough of the subject to lay it before me,” gently urged Father Dusette.

“I came to you because I couldn’t get her terrible face out of my mind.”

“Why? Because that is something that has come into your life that must be dealt with. Grant she seems worthless; her body is—but her soul? The soul for which Christ was crucified, that must be saved, or at least an effort put forth to save it. Living in a pagan world, we religious realize this is an era of modern paganism; Leo Sibley you cannot and you dare not be a pagan. The essence of the principle of paganism is indifference to the wants, needs or sorrows of our neighbors. ‘That is none of my business’ is Paganism’s Slogan. ‘This is my wounded brother or sister,’ is Christianity’s watchword. Go to her, deal as tenderly with her as you would with Loretta—don’t start my son.”

“God, Father! don’t couple their names.”

“Just for a minute my son—go to Mildred Brown’s soul and save it as tenderly as you would Loretta’s if need be.”

“Oh, Father, Father, I have tried so hard to do the right thing, it has almost killed me to hold back the burn-

ing words of love, not to touch her, not to show her. I have knelt at your feet in Confession. I have sworn never to look on her face again after that one time and—then comes this. Why does God treat me now as a reprobate?"

The priest's beautiful eyes gazed tenderly at him, rising he went to his desk, picked up Faber's 'At the Foot of the Cross,' while Leo Sibley, as if fascinated by his strange silence, watched him with wildly fevered eyes till the passage sought for being found Father Dusette read,

"Father Faber says,

'Would it not be an unproductive day in which we did not meet our Lord? We must rarely expect to meet Him, except with a Cross and that a new one. When we are in sorrow, He Himself draws near and goes with us. That is the privilege of sorrow. We read the lives of holy persons and wonder how ever they can have attained to such a pitch of union with God, little suspecting all the while that we have sorrow enough to carry us further still than that, only we would not wait for Jesus. Why then are we so amazed when crosses come? What cross we shall meet today we know not, but we know if we meet Jesus, we will meet a Cross.'

Listen, Leo—

Some men meet him and turn away. Some see Him far off and turn down another road. Some pass by pretending not to see Him.'

Leo, my son! Do you understand? Because you have turned in earnest to God, because you have promised to be a whole Catholic you are bound to meet Jesus. Now, Leo, answer my son. How must you meet him every day?"

A pause—then Leo with a face transfigured with God's glory said,

‘With a Cross, Father. A Cross. I understand; I shall go to her and then come back to you and tell you the results. Before I go,’ he said with his radiant smile, “tell me, is our Lord meeting me in this? Mr. Gibbons, anxious to send a trustworthy agent to France, begs me to take the commission.”

Father Dusette was radiant, “You ask me is our Lord in that? He is showing you the way. Leo take the offer, forget the heart wrench and go—when?”

Leo smiled again, this time a spice of mischief in his smile, “After the ball, Father.”

CHAPTER XXVI
LAWRENCE GETS INTERESTED IN POLITICS
AND PLUMBERS

That afternoon, Nurse walking unannounced into Lawrence's room found him busily engaged in studying the big telephone directory. For some time past, Nurse's motherly heart had been racked with anxiety. She had, unconscious to herself been looking at Lawrence through the vision of others; his father's oft repeated disgust, Loretta's prayerful solicitude, and Kate's openly expressed opinions were all taking root in that mother-heart. Not that she saw as yet, her idol was clay, but it hurt, that others touched lightly that which she still held in reverence. That Lawrence was idle, she would have been blind indeed not to see; his idleness heretofore she had excused on the ground of work not being necessary, but Loretta's oft repeated instructions of the nuns, on the sanctity, the nobility of labor worried the heart of Nurse. If she could only get Lawrence at some steady work, she would show the others their diagnosis of her darling was not correct. In this frame of mind noting his apparently idle occupation she impatiently asked,

“Larry, in heaven's name, haven't you any other book to study but the foam book?”

He laughed easily, “Nurse, this is a big study. Gee! I never knew there were so many of the same name.”

“And haven't you anything else to do but find that out?” she impatiently asked. Something in her tone made him turn to her in astonishment and ask,

“What's eating you, Nurse?”

“You are, Larry. Oh, me darlin’ why don’t you do something—why don’t you be having a job like your father?”

“Like dad? What’s the use? He has all the rocks I’ll ever need, but if they ever get busted, why I’ll learn a trade then.”

“Oh learn it now, Avourneen, learn it now,” she eagerly pleaded.

“Well of all the—Say, what bug’s got you Nurse?”

“No bug, child, no bug but I do be grieved to hear them talking about your laziness,” and to Lawrence’s genuine astonishment, not to say solicitude, for he really loved his foster mother, she began to cry in the despairing way of the old. He bounded from his chair, caught her in a tight hug and told her roughly to “cut it out” to shut up” and various other elegant phrases till he succeeded in drying her tears and making her smile.

“Now see here—I think more of your little finger than all of them put together and I won’t stand for their interference. You tell them all to go to Halifax, and say—now look here, do you mind me? Listen. If I haven’t a job two months from now, I’ll skip the country!”

“Glory be! What kind of a job?”

“Now, that’s another thing, Nurse! Not a word—a dead secret, and don’t you bother me, nosing round here to find out what I am doing. You just keep away till I get good and ready to tell you what I am doing and then you can tell those busybodies. And now scuttle off because that telephone book is the beginning of the job.”

“Well, well, see that now,” and beaming with pleasure, Nurse ambled out.

Lawrence again savagely attacked the book, muttering to himself in displeasure, “thought him lazy, did

they ? He'd show them, maybe when they found out what he was doing they wouldn't be quite so ready with opinions, etc."

"Hang the 'D's.' How many are there. And I don't know her father's first name. Well I'll be switched for an idiot. Why didn't I look in the plumbers, Oh boy! Donohue, O'Donahue, Dounahue. What the—she said a 'g.' Wooh! Here it is! Michael! That sounds Irish enough. Donaghue. That's the ticket. This must be his shop. I wonder if they are well off enough to have a home phone. O crickey! Here it is," hastily writing both addresses and chuckling with delight he tiptoed downstairs into the cellar. But stumbling with a loud noise over an empty box at the side of the stairs, he eagerly held his breath in suspense while he heard Nurse in the hall remarking to Lucy, "That pesky cat is down in the cellar again. Crazy enough to think she'd find rats." In spite of his precaution Lawrence had to laugh softly, but carefully tiptoeing round, he finally found his quest, a hammer and a small nail; and then sped noiselessly up to his room, and quickly entered the beautiful bath room and began a thorough investigation of its perfect fittings.

"Not a damn thing the matter with it." After much thought and examination he put the small nail to the most exposed pipe and knocked it on the head with a hammer. A loud noise was the only result. "Shucks, I'll have to deaden that!" Putting an elegant towel as pad to the head of the nail he knocked again and again, till, to his delight, he made a very small hole through which the water slowly, but surely trickled.

Then a mad rush for his hat and coat, a ride on the subway down to the old fashioned quarter of New York and a much excited young man found himself outside an

unpretentious plumber's shop. The only occupant of the place, a fine, intelligent old man, whose striking likeness to Mollie Donaghue made the fact evident that he was her father, opened the door of the shop with a genial

“What can I do for you sir?”

“You are a plumber?”

“I am that same, Michael Donaghue at your service.”

Lawrence bowed—the two men felt a mutual attraction while the older man was wondering what brought such a handsome swell down to Charles street—Lawrence was marveling at the quiet dignity of the old workman.

“Well I have a job for you. Get your tools and come with me.”

Once in the subway, speeding up town the shrewd old man asked Lawrence if all the uptown plumbers were on a strike.

Lawrence explained having some work down town and seeing Mr. Donaghue's plumber sign he bethought him of the leak in his bath tub.

But Lawrence had not reckoned with the curiosity of Nurse and he was not a little non-plussed on reaching home to meet her at the hall-door. A surprised look at the plumber—and she quickly advanced to meet them, her face alive with interrogation. Lawrence's wits saved the day, stepping behind the plumber he shook a warning finger of reminder at Nurse.

“My soul to God,” she said to herself, “what kind of job is he thinking of getting,” and then left them.

Breathing a sigh of relief he signed to the plumber to ascend. For one moment as the old man examined the leak, Lawrence felt anxious,

“Humph, this is strange. Mr. Gibbons, this plumbing is as near perfect as you'll get on earth—maybe in heaven

—I don't for the life of me see— why this looks like a nail hole.” He straightened himself while Lawrence doubled down in pretended examination, and said without looking up,

“It does seem strange.”

“If you had any boys around sir?”

“But we have,” eagerly assented Lawrence.

“Oh! If that's the case, the mystery is explained. I'll have this fixed in a jiffy.”

While arranging his tools, Lawrence, delighted by the outcome of his rascally scheme, chatted gaily on every known thing that suggested itself. The older man, fully under the influence of the other's charming personality, enjoyed his new experience, and when the pipe was carefully mended, he not unwillingly accepted Lawrence's genial offer to stay for a smoke. To the surprise of the younger man, the old plumber was not only intelligent, but a lover of books, and in leisure times, an intense reader.

The wily Lawrence saw an opportunity of closer connection with his new friend and adroitly introduced the subject of politics.

“You are very much interested in politics, Mr. Donaghue,” he inquired. “You are a citizen.”

“Politics! Citizen you say? I am that. Sure what kind of a citizen would I be if I wasn't interested in politics?”

“Not the best kind of a citizen is always interested in politics,” suggested Lawrence. The old man gave him a keen look and laughingly assented, saying to the astonishment of his listener,

“But Mr. Gibbons, you must distinguish between politics and politicians; the first implies the party that

governs, or is trying to govern, and in either case the voter hopes it is a good one; the second implies the scamps that want to run the government without knowing a dang bit about it, except to feather their own nests. Now down in our ward, but you are too high up to be interested down there, in the 9th ward." Wearing the solemn seriousness of a judge, Lawrence assured him he was very much interested in that particular ward, having a very warm friend there and formulating at that instant the resolution to manufacture, if necessary, the required evidence of friendship, the rascal asked him to introduce him to the particular needs of that particular 9th ward.

If there was one topic that delighted old Donaghue more than another, it was politics, so eagerly launched on his favorite subject, an hour passed swiftly. Lawrence must have been lacking in intelligence, if at the end of the interview, he did not understand the merits and demerits of the rival candidates for office; it happened, as luck would have it, a civic election was near at hand.

When the clock on the mantelpiece struck four Mr. Donaghue jumped up with

"By the hokey! I am taking up all your busy time."

"Not at all, not at all, Mr. Donaghue," said Lawrence genially. "Of course I'm busy," he unblushingly continued, "but never too busy to have an hour with you. If there is one thing I need brushing up on, it is politics and you have such a clear idea on that subject—" he paused, Mr. Donaghue was pleased; here was a young man, a rich one, not too proud to learn the law of the land from one of the working class, the old man enthusiastically said,

"Look here, Mr. Gibbons, come down some night to see me and the boys. You know where the shop is, well

we live one block south of that. Any one will tell you where Michael Donaghue lives. It is me own, a shanty compared to this palace—but me own,” he said proudly straightening himself.

Lawrence delighted with the invitation could hardly contain himself.

“Certainly I’ll go see you, and I am glad you own your house; but the attraction there will be yourself and your sons. I think I’ll be in that neighborhood the night after tomorrow night.”

Shaking hands on the proposed visit they parted mutually pleased.

CHAPTER XXVII
LORETTA'S FIRST BALL

The evening of the Ball found Loretta in eager excitement, as owing to the rush of orders, her ball dress had not arrived. Lady Gordon measured so accurately her dresses needed no preparatory fitting, but her patrons as a rule received their gowns on the morning of the important event. Both Lawrence and her father had made several trips to Loretta's room to see if the young mistress were ready, before the expected gown made its appearance. When the box was opened, Loretta clapped her hands with delight, as Nurse and Lucy carefully lifted the creamy, foamy lace dress from its receptacle.

"Oh, is it not beautiful? Just like a spiderweb, a fairy cobweb. Oh, put it on, put it on," cried Loretta, dancing with glee.

"Well, well, how can a body put it on, when you're actin like a crazy fairy—here, stay still. Hold her curls up, Lucy; aisy now, you'll tear it darlin'."

"Where are the sleeves, Nurse, Lucy, where are they?" excitedly asked Loretta, turning rapidly from side to side.

"Aisy now," cautioned Nurse, looking significantly at Lucy, "did you find them?" in a whisper.

"There's none to find," said the disgusted Lucy.

"Ah, here they are, my soul to God! slips of baby ribbon," aspirated an indignant Nurse.

With wildly dilated eyes, Loretta looked at her reflection in the glass, a vision of beauty, clad in gossamer film, but arms, neck and back—ALL bare, and that part

which was covered was so suggestively expressive of nudity that the convent girl could only gasp.

“Well, hello, finished titivating?” hilariously called out her father, breezing into the room where stood three awe struck women, “why—a! what the—where’s your dress, Loretta?”

Waking up suddenly, Loretta cried out in great distress. “Oh, father go out. I am not dressed.”

“Not dressed? I should say so. What the devil does this mean, Nurse?” angrily turning to the worried old woman.

“Mean? It means that Mrs. Harcourt thought she’d try her pagan ways with our darlin’ here.”

“Kitty Harcourt sent that dress for my daughter? Damn it! She must be crazy. What can you do Nurse?” but seeing Loretta’s attempt to cover herself with her curls, after telling Nurse to fix her up some way, he hastily withdrew from the room.

When the first shock to decency wore away, Loretta’s quick mind came to her rescue. Directing the Nurse to get her her mother’s wedding veil, a beautiful piece of flimsy lace, slightly colored by age, the three worked quickly. They sewed a part of the veil on white silk and inserted this in a V-shape in the back, covered the neck with three or four folds of wedding veil so that no suggestive flesh showed through; and draped the rest over the beautiful arms to the gloved elbow.

When the attire was finished, Loretta stood a beautiful illustration of a vestal virgin of Ireland’s purest pagan days, or better still, the highest type of a convent girl, at least so her father thought; but not so Lawrence.

“Gee, you’re a dream, but say! That’s not Lucille’s creation. If Gordon put that out! she’s fit for the angels.

What did you do with your neck and arms? I bet you brought that dress from the convent."

"Don't it look new?" anxiously asked his father.

"New? You bet your sweet life, dad, it looks new. I can't remember when I saw a ball dress not decollete. But she's all right! Come on sis."

The ball was in full swing when the three Gibbons reached the hall. As the dense crowd made an approach to the hostess an impossibility, Lawrence and Loretta at once joined the dancers; not before, however, Mrs. Harcourt's eagle eye had sighted the two.

"Good gracious, Kate, look at Loretta. Gordon surely never sent a dress like that," excitedly exclaimed Mrs. Harcourt. Kate whose dress was shamefully decollete, saw and understood.

"The darling! God bless her. She looks like an angel in a crowd of—I do not know what. We do not seem decent with her in our midst." Many beside Kate had similar thoughts, as Loretta passed in the crowd. Without a word the convent girl preached her sermon. But after her first dance with Lawrence, and Loretta had a breathing spell to look around; she felt sick, so many were daringly unclad, young girls,—why there went a girl of St. Ignatius Church, a Child of Mary, back all bare! There an old woman—"

"Enjoying yourself child?" eagerly asked her father, coming up at that moment.

"I would if I could. How dreadfully they are dressed. Why do they do it, father?"

"Hanged if I know! There you are Kitty."

"Gerald, surely Gordon didn't send that dress."

"You bet your life she didn't!"

"Miss Loretta," eagerly interrupted Mr. Sibley who

had appeared suddenly on the scene, "may I have this dance?" They floated off, leaving Mrs. Harcourt and Mr. Gibbons in a politely heated discourse.

Loretta and Leo Sibley danced in silence; he was afraid to talk, and she who loved dancing as a flower, the sunshine, wanted no other enjoyment. When the dance was finished, a little out of breath she said,

"Let us sit down a while, 'tis so very warm."

The only available place near, out of the crushing crowd, was a little artificially made bower of plants—there was nothing to do but to comply with Loretta's request and seat themselves. Turning at his strange silence, she said with genuine sympathy,

"Oh, Mr. Sibley, dear friend, I have not seen you for so long a time. Have you been sick, are you sick?"

Deadly pale, nearly distraught with sorrow at this last glimpse of heaven, Mr. Sibley said in his ordinary tones, keeping a tight rein on his feelings,

"I have not been feeling well, Loretta."

"Oh, I'm so sorry, you've been so good a friend to Lawrence and me. You were such a comfort to me with that dreadful Trixy." She bent to pick up a fallen flower, and all the love for her that was in the man's heart shone in his face, transfiguring it; she looked up to catch but a fleeting expression, for true to his word to keep his secret from her, he hid the full betrayal of his love. She saw the change in his pale face, however, and rejoiced.

"You look, oh, so much better. Of course you know, Mr. Sibley, Larry has given up Trixy."

"I know. He told me so," he smiled his rare smile; but showed no tenderness, dropping his eyes for fear he would.

“Is not this flower beautiful? It seems a pity they must come here to die.”

“More than the flowers come here to die,” his voice was low and intense.

“What do you mean?” her eyes sought his as an innocent child.

“Oh, nothing, Loretta, are you enjoying your ball? 'Tis lucky for me they failed to see us slip in here; there are shoals of fellows waiting to dance with you.”

“You ask me, Mr. Sibley, if I enjoy the ball? I do and I do not. The crowd is too large for one thing, and—” she blushed.

“I understand. Thank God you do not enjoy it.”

“I enjoy dancing with you,” she said naively. He laughed, “I’m glad you do. One more dance, Loretta and I’m off—I sail tomorrow in the early morning so I’ll sleep on the Hans Albert to night.”

“I am sorry you are going,” she said simply. A shade of pain flitted across his face, a mighty effort, and he answered quietly,

“Thank you Loretta. I want you to promise me one thing, will you?”

“If I can,” she simply answered.

“You will soon make your real debut, you will then be in this atmosphere constantly, in the swim, as they say. Tonight, the sordidness of the thing, the—if you will pardon me—rottenness of our so-called society, the purely fashionable, those who read are not vulgar, has shocked your womanhood—but the next time, you will not be so shocked—the next, the effect will be slighter—but promise me, no matter what influence is brought to bear on you, you will never become a woman who has ceased to blush—you will never be one of them—” he paused; she

has been listening eagerly with varying expression, holding herself in restraint, suddenly she burst out.

"I can promise you that. I shall never cease to be shocked at half dressed women, if that's what you mean, oh, Leo," she had involuntarily used his Christian name, he started towards her with a glad cry, but instantly restrained his emotion and asked quickly,

"Yes, Loretta, what is it?"

"Oh, I thought of what Sister Ambrose used to teach us; to remember that the difference between the saint and the sinner is in the use we make of God's grace. Perhaps, those poor girls—" she stopped; never had she looked more beautiful; his eyes flashed, he knew she did not love him, but he knew that she appealed to him as to one who understood—could he not make her love him? The thought was joy; no, his only salvation was in flight.

"Loretta, I asked for another dance, but—" looking at his watch, "I must go, you will pardon me." His face paled, the lines of pain were distinct, all the tender sympathy of her nature awoke. "

"You are ill, I know. Here take some of these flowers—"

Plucking them from her corsage she handed them to him with the simple grace of a child and then turned to adjust her dress. She did not catch him kissing them rapturously, but her father, who had been watching the two for the last few moments, saw and understood. And when he noted how quickly Mr. Sibley put himself on guard, whenever Loretta looked in his direction, the courage of the younger evoked the older man's sincerest admiration.

"By George! the poor devil! He's got sand. Hello, Sibley, not going so soon. You have loads of time. Some-

thing to fix up? Oh, in that case—Here, Larry, can't you get a partner for your sister?"

"A partner! dad? Great Scott! the boys have me pulled to pieces. Yes, certainly Mr. Wead, Loretta, oh say! Bill, patience. Now Jack that's unkind—What, Wally? 'Et tu brute'?" laughed Lawrence, besieged on all sides for an introduction, while Loretta, in the hurry of the moment could only say, 'good-bye, dear friend,' and Leo Sibley passed out of her sight; and—out of her life.

Mr. Gibbons, hurrying after him in the crowd, Lawrence failed to take in the significance of his friend's departure, called out,

"Sibley, hold on, look here, lad,—I saw and understand. I respect you as a man."

"Thank you. She is an angel."

Mr. Gibbons touched by the other's grief said brusquely, "She is too young yet. I'm not anxious to lose her—but Leo Sibley, I think a heap of you,—"

"Oh, don't. Good God! don't tempt me."

"Tempt you?" exclaimed the other blankly. Hastily searching in his vest pocket, Mr. Sibley took a newspaper clipping from an old pocket book, put the slip into Mr. Gibbons' left hand, and wringing his right hand so tightly as to make him wince, dashed down the stairs. Eagerly reading the clipping, Mr. Gibbons gave vent to a long whistle and slowly and sadly re-entered the ballroom to find Loretta in great distress with one beautiful arm and shoulder completely denuded of covering. The lace of her dress having been caught in some lady's hanging chains, was torn off. Appealing to her father, Loretta quickly sought the dressing room, only to find it empty, at least so she thought, until heavy sobs in a distant cor-

ner, startled her. Kate the gallant, with face buried in a lounge billow, was sobbing to break her heart.

“John—he says; oh dear. Yes he got home sooner than he expected, came right here—oh, oh, he says he’s ashamed of my dress—won’t dance with me.” Loretta rose to the occasion.

“Here Kate, stop that. See, I brought this as a wrap! Is it not pretty?” holding up a beautiful red china silk scarf, “See, throw it round you so, oh! you look stunning.” Kate laughed in spite of herself, and after explaining to Loretta, she despised her own nudity, only did it to please her mother, knowing the big disappointment her poor ma would get; would never again sacrifice the smallest particle of principle for any one; was a pagan anyhow, would soon, please God, be a Christian; gaily left Loretta, the latter assuring her that as her dress was beyond repair, she was going home.

John Russell, moodily standing near the door, radiated happiness at the sight of Kate draped in a brilliant scarf and catching her delightedly swung her off into a two-step; but not before Mrs. Harcourt took in everything. Almost beside herself, her mother could hardly wait till the end of the dance to follow the two into one of the little bowers.

“Kate Harcourt, what does this mean? Are you and Loretta determined to set me crazy?”

“Ma, darling!”

“Answer me Kate. What does this mean?”

Realizing it was too late to temporize, Kate bravely faced her mother and said in gentle but determined tones,

“John did not wish me to be dressed so, or rather undressed, Ma.”

“John! Good heavens. What has he got to do with your dress?”

“A good deal, Mrs. Harcourt, I couldn’t stand for my intended wife wearing such a dress.”

A look of horror! A terrific sweep of anger, then a wild wail of agony and Mrs. Harcourt sank to the floor in a faint.

CHAPTER XXVIII

“THE SHADOW OF THE GARDEN”

That night a man almost distraught with sorrow paced the silent deck of the Steamer Hans Albert, his steps heavy weighted, sounded as a death knell on the silent air, his hot face cooled by the breeze from the sound alternately paled or reddened as emotion shook his frame, his brilliant eyes shone with fevered passion or swam in hot blinding tears; as back and forth he paced, till the stars dimmed out by the approaching dawn disappeared, then, physically tired, he sank on his knees and stretching out his long arms in the direction of that part of New York wherein she lived, he prayed aloud,

“God protect and bless you my angel Loretta. Oh Jesus, through your agony in the Garden help me live my life.”

He rose; and the watch, passing on his way to be relieved, noticed a pale faced gentleman who courteously responded to his greeting.

Leo Sibley had met our Lord with the cross and quietly, resignedly and bravely took it up.

CHAPTER XXIX

WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK

When, sometime before the catastrophe of the ball Mollie in a hurried visit to her home beheld the rascally Lawrence basking at the Donaghue hearth, she had no words to express her blank astonishment. Indeed so apparent was her surprise that her keen-witted Irish-American brothers caught the situation at once and on the spot became silent gleeful allies of the wily Lawrence. Not so, Mr. Donaghue, blinded as he was by his new friend's charming personality, he did not understand and took an opportunity before Mollie's departure to tax her roundly with rudeness towards his esteemed guest.

"Let him stay where he belongs, we don't want him," exclaimed a thoroughly exasperated Mollie.

Her father looked at her in blank amazement and in his most dignified manner closed the subject by saying,

"Mollie, I am ashamed of you. Is that all the manners the nuns taught you. I'm master in this house and I'll have what guests I like, so there now."

After this, it was easy for Lawrence with such valuable allies as the male Donahues to make opportunities of meeting his rebellious mistress, and she, try as she would, gradually but surely became an unwilling captive to his charms. Then too, Mrs. Harcourt's dangerous illness, resulting from the failure of her ambitious schemes, helped to throw Mollie and Lawrence often together; for Loretta, torn with anxiety and love made use of a much too jubilant messenger in the guise of her brother to the

Harcourt household. Either Lawrence or she was always in attendance at the sick bed.

Kate, torn with love and remorse was sorely in need of sympathetic friends. Just as the beauty of the Old Church had enthralled her senses, reason and soul, and had filled her with ardent longing to become a Catholic, her mother's mortal illness fell like a pall. In the dread anticipation of a sudden death, Kate turned to Loretta and in her absence to her brother. Unused to sorrow, the selfish Lawrence was deeply affected by Kate's bitter anguish and really rose to the occasion and became a valuable adjunct in the sick room. But when he saw the ardent love John Russell openly displayed for Kate, Lawrence instinctively turned to Mollie trying in vain to win a kindness from her.

On one of these occasions, a highly exasperated young woman beckoned a delighted young man out of a darkened sick room and, standing in the doorway, met him with a very determined

"Mr. Gibbons, this has to stop."

With well simulated surprise, Lawrence gravely asked,

"What has to stop, Mollie?"

"Oh, bother, you know perfectly well, Mr. Lawrence, I will never marry a man that has no religion."

Staggered a little, knowing he was dealing with a very decided young woman, Lawrence put on a brave front and gravely assured her he was glad to hear it; a call from a distracted Kate put an end to this encounter of wits. But it had its effect, that Saturday night saw a very handsome young fellow kneeling humbly in the confessional, and the next morning revealed a reverential young man receiving Communion at the side of a dread-

fully distracted young woman. And a villianous grin of jubilation in a chance (?) meeting at the church door did not serve to add to the composure of the young woman. The little love episode, however, between Lawrence and Mollie was some time after halted by tragedy.

CHAPTER XXX

A PERFECT ACT OF CONTRITION

Mrs. Harcourt struck with heart paralysis had for weeks been wrapped in semi unconsciousness. Kate to whom the Catholic religion then meant everything was nearly distracted with fear.

“Oh, Loretta, what shall I do if she dies without forgiving me? Mother darling, speak just one word—Oh my God, do not let her die without a word. Oh, I cannot let my precious mother go without recognizing God. Oh, one word to God, only, I am satisfied. Oh, Loretta, Lawrence, John,” frantically cried Kate, “Oh, all of you, pray she’ll make an act of perfect contrition. Father Dusette, “springing up to meet him. “that would save her?””

“Certainly, my child, and she’ll make it too,” he answered soothingly, and bending over Mrs. Harcourt, who was then heavily breathing her last, he whispered in her ear, They waited—no response. Again he tried—nothing! That the end was near was apparent to all. Kate distractedly threw herself on her knees.

“Father, she was baptized in the High Church; ask her if she is sorry. Oh my God, don’t let her die that way, mother darling, listen to him, do you. Oh press my hand, dearest, Oh God, she did!” shrieked Kate. “A perfect act, Father.”

“My God I am sorry for my sins, not through fear of hell but because I love you,” the priest’s low, round tones, insisting, “because I love you.” Kate watching the stolid face saw a movement of the lips, and felt the press-

ure from the dying hand as her mother died making an act of perfect contrition. With a wild, glad cry, throwing herself into John's outstretched arms,

“Oh, John, my beloved Mother is saved. She is saved,” Kate rapturously exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXXI
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

Mrs. Harcourt's miraculous conversion at the moment of death, had a wonderful effect on Lawrence. Never had death touched him so closely; never had the capacity of the human heart for love and anguish been so directly revealed to him as it was in the case of Kate.

In that interval of revelation, he saw the woman in Kate, he realized that the interior soul meant more than regular features and with that understanding came a contempt for his own past shallow analysis of character. What a fool he had been, rejecting his sister's friend because of her Caesarian nose, and accepting Trixy. Well, please God, he had learned a lesson—and he would see to it that he would show his wisdom in making Mollie accept him.

Kate, overwhelmed in grief could not but notice the change in Lawrence, how kind he was, how thoughtful. He and John saw to everything, not a necessary detail of the funeral was forgotten. And soon after that sad event all parties concerned thinking it best, Father Dusette married Kate and John.

It was a quiet wedding, in the basement of St. Ignatius' Church. The hour was early—all present, gratefully happy. A pretty wedding breakfast following at the Gibbons' home with only Father Dusette, Mr. Gibbons, Loretta and the irrepressible Lawrence present; of course Nurse, Mollie and Lucy were very important adjuncts to the success of the affair, then a bridal tour on the elevated, Kate emphatically declined all use of autos to the cozy little house in Yonkers; and John and Kate Russell began a new life.

CHAPTER XXXII

TWO LETTERS

A little before noon, after seeing the bridal pair to their new home, Father Dusette entered his humble room, to find a large, foreign looking letter placed on his desk. He eagerly opened and read. It was from Leo Sibley, after a few minor details the important part was,

“Before sailing I had a hard time to make Mildred leave her husband without the scandal of a divorce, of course he absolutely refused to give her alimony. That staggered her, but when I worked on her mother love and told her to live so she could meet her son in heaven and promising her a quarterly allowance from my salary, she yielded. I am enclosing a check which you will give her when she calls. I made her promise to go to you, hoping you would teach her to love God.

Of course I am out of the U. S. for “Keeps.” Never again. That thought when I reached Paris and got to work made me mad—clean insane. It was tough, more than I thought I could tackle. One beautiful face haunted me. I tried to force Mildred’s face in its place, but it wouldn’t work. I prayed, God, how I prayed—I worked as the office men said, like one possessed, and then, my dear old Father, God’s grace got the upper hand of the devil; and peace came. Now I am happy! I rejoice at the struggle that every day brings, knowing with every obstacle surmounted, I have met Him with his Cross. Oh! Father, it is grand. I am living now, a great, big, active life. I am fighting in the Arena. And you, God love you, my dear old Father, have made me what I am,

Your devoted Leo.

With his brilliant eyes dim with tears, glad tears, Father Dusette sought his usual refuge in sorrow and joy—prayer.

A second letter from Leo Sibley found its way to Mr. Gibbons' office. The writer thanked his employer for his munificent salary and still better for Mr. Gibbon's promise to see that the Paris position be made a permanent one, "For you understand," the letter ran, "loving Loretta as I do, I may never dare to live near her. I have left my heart in the United States, but my soul to do and dare is here.

I enclose a clipping which I beg you to give to Lawrence under a promise of secrecy. I love the kid and I wish him happiness. A peep into my wretched past may be of help to him. Regards to Loretta, Larry, Mollie, Nurse, Kate, John.

Devotedly,
Leo.

The enclosed clippings were two slips of newspaper of different dates and years, the first ran

"WEDDED IN THE SACRISTY OF ST XAVIER'S CHURCH. Our talented townsman, Leo Sibley, and our popular ballet dancer, Maybelle, family name, Mildred Spencer."

Dated two years later, the second newspaper clipping read:

"MRS. LEO SIBLEY NEE MILDRED SPENCER, the former danseuse Maybelle of ballet fame, granted divorce from her husband, Leo Sibley, charge non-congenial; cruelty. Husband not appearing, the divorce was granted. Rumors say Mrs. Sibley will shortly marry Mr. James Brown, the millionaire."

There were tears too, in Mr. Gibbon's eyes as he reverently folded the slips into Leo Sibley's letter and carefully locked in a secret draw, his heart story.

CHAPTER XXXIII

LAWRENCE ILLUSTRATES WILLPOWER

The wedded happiness of Kate and John was as fuel to the love fire in Lawrence's heart and having made his peace with God, he naturally supposed the course of true love was bound to run smoothly, but alas for human hopes! Molly actually refused him—the reason? She was Mrs. Harcourt's cook, or she had been—she would not disgrace the Gibbons family. Mollie found to her sorrow that she really loved Lawrence, in fact loved him too much, as she claimed, to disgrace him. In vain, Lawrence used all his eloquence, even borrowed that of his intended father-in-law and brothers-in-law, all to no purpose.

“In heaven's name, Mollie, what is a lot of money that it should wreck two people's lives. Lord, I'll chuck every cent of my inheritance into the Hudson.”

“And then?” quietly asked Mollie.

“Why marry you, of course,” promptly answered Lawrence.

“And what would you live on,” sarcastically asked Mollie, steeling her heart against his ardent love.

“Why—why—I'd work,” triumphantly.

“You would! And you don't know a thing. Sure you are too lazy to work.”

Stung beyond endurance, Lawrence dashed from her presence; a month passed before she saw him again. A month of sorrow, desolation and agony so great that Mollie felt she could hardly endure it; when before her amazed vision, she saw a dirty, mud-bespattered young plumber in the wagon with her brothers. The battered

hat was courteously removed from the beautiful head, and Lawrence grinned delightedly at his amazed sweet-heart.

There was no way out of it; and the end of that week Mollie was married at early morn in St. Ignatius Church, the only witnesses being her own relatives, and Loretta and Nurse.

CHAPTER XXXIV

MOLLIE WINS OUT

A short time after this had happened, a very angry man entered the Gibbons' house.

"Loretta, Loretta, Nurse, where the devil are you," he called.

"Here, father darling," quavered Loretta, fearing the worst. Without kissing her Mr. Gibbons angrily threw off his overcoat, pitched his hat in the direction of the stairs and then stalked angrily into the reception room closely followed by Loretta, with Nurse, keeping guard at the open door.

"My God! What next! Mrs. Harcourt's cook! Think of it, the son of one of the richest men in New York, Mollie the cook, ha! ha!

"Father," pleaded Loretta, "She is a good girl!"

"Good!" snorted her father. "What has goodness to do with it? We are the talk of the city!"

"There might have been a greater talk had Lawrence married Trixie," quietly answered Loretta.

"Trixie?" roared her father, "the ballet dancer? Huh! half a dozen of one and six of the other."

"No, father, there is no comparison. Mollie is a fine girl. She absolutely refused to marry Lawrence; first, because he had no religion and then because she would not disgrace his family and finally she wouldn't marry a man too lazy to work."

"What the devil did she marry him for then?"

"Lawrence is now a good Catholic and a first-class plumber."

“What—a what?”

“To show her that he could work, he learned her brothers’ trade.”

“A plumber!” repeated her father, seizing the opportune moment to give the thought time to take root, Loretta and Nurse disappeared and estatically hugged each other in the hall.

Long Mr. Gibbons sat till thoroughly saturated with the thought, he grinned, saying to himself,

“By George; the girl that could make that rascally young pagan pray and work must have sand.”

CHAPTER XXXV

THE SUNSHINE OF THE CONVENT

Chesterton, in his discription of the Irish character says the Irishman is a natural logician. But let an American, the genuine kind, not the Indian, the only true American, one who can trace his descent at least three generations back to citizenship—let him be convinced as to the justice of a disputed point and you have won him. Mr. Gibbins' great grandfather had adopted America as his own; and with the right to vote bequeathed to his descendants the Celtic nature, warm, inspirational, poetic, just—the rest was easy, freedom in the air—the liberty to expand—the freedom to live and to reason—and the result in the third generation was Gerald Gibbons, a fine American. After satisfying himself that Mollie had worked a remarkable evolution in the character of his son, his reason told the older man the younger was right. With Gerald Gibbons, to think was to act; and not long after the Donaghue family were galvanized into expecting something about to happen, when the majestic proportions of Mr. Gibbons dimmed their sitting room door.

An awkward moment—then Mollie rose womanly and sweet with outstretched hand and said,

“Oh, you are welcome, Mr. Gibbons! We are so glad!” A moment's hesitation and Mr. Gibbons stooped and kissed his daughter-in-law, then grasped Lawrence by the shoulder and with a hug cried,

“You young scamp.”

Mr. Gibbons, as the younger Donaghue expressed it, was a mixer, and the evening past joyously—the only one

hitch being Mollie's decided refusal to move to the Gibbons home.

"No, no house can stand two heads. I love Loretta and she loves me, but one house is not big enough for the two of us."

With genuine admiration Mr. Gibbons conceded; but offered to furnish another home near by. Appreciating with all the largeness of her nature her father-in-law's desire to add to their happiness, Mollie knelt beside his chair and shyly laying her hand on his big arm while Lawrence watched her adoringly, said softly,

"No, Mr. Gibbons, let Lawrence work for his home, give him a job in your office, let him work up, and by the time he has enough money to make a home, New York will have forgotten he has married Mrs. Harcourt's cook."

Turning suddenly, his eyes full of love, Mr. Gibbons gathered Mollie up in a crushing hug.

"You grand little woman. Lawrence may bless his stars he's got you. How did it happen?"

"Dad! I think Loretta's prayers had a good bit to do with it."

"You bet your bottom dollar on that, Sir," enthusiastically cried old Donaghue. "That's a Convent girl we Catholics may be proud of."

That evening as Mr. Gibbons sat in his beautiful room reviewing the pleasant happenings of the day, Loretta tiptoeing into the room, bent lovingly over him.

"Father, is not Mollie a dear?" her father had told Loretta at their late dinner of his visit to the Donaghue home.

"Most emphatically she is, dress her up and put her in a fine house and she'd pass with the best of them. Let them dare throw 'the Harcourt cook' at her."

“Why should we care if they do call her the Cook; she worked it is true; why should that throw discredit on us papa dear? Have you not worked, in a different strata of society, I grant. And Lawrence, is he not more creditable to us now that he knows how to work than when he was just a lazy ornament of society?”

“Loretta, you are, I am afraid, a little socialist” smiled Mr. Gibbons.

“No father, I have nothing in common with the so-called modern socialists but I do respect the worker. I am only a girl, but what I have seen of our New York society impresses me with the fact that the idle men and women are our breakers of the law of God—are our sinners. The world today needs prayer and the monks say, ‘Work is Prayer’.”

“Little logician, where did you learn that?”

“Where I learned everything good, from the nuns. When I feared to leave them to go with you, they showed me my duty—to live and work for you.”

“God,” he tensely aspirated. “What have I done to deserve this?”

“Everything, my precious father. You have lived your life justly, according to your lights—but some day you will know more; till then—” she stopped.

Looking adoringly at her he reverentially answered.

“Till then—I thank God for that Convent training which has given me my Sunshine.”

End.

